

Chinook Initiative

FY2015 Request: \$10,000,000

Reference No: 57021

AP/AL: Appropriation

Project Type: Research / Studies / Planning

Category: Natural Resources

Location: Statewide

House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)

Impact House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)

Contact: Kevin Brooks

Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2014 - 06/30/2019

Contact Phone: (907)465-6138

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

This capital project will continue to implement the Department of Fish and Game’s Chinook salmon research plan, developed in response to significant declines in Chinook salmon returns experienced statewide. These declines in Chinook salmon production have resulted in economic and social hardships across many communities in rural and urban areas of Alaska. Results from this project will be used to better understand and characterize changing productivity and abundance trends. This will ultimately lead to improved Chinook salmon stock assessment programs so that Alaskans will have improved harvest opportunities, even during times of low productivity.

Funding:	<u>FY2015</u>	<u>FY2016</u>	<u>FY2017</u>	<u>FY2018</u>	<u>FY2019</u>	<u>FY2020</u>	<u>Total</u>
Gen Fund	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$2,500,000				\$22,500,000
Total:	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$2,500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$22,500,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
Totals:	0	0

Prior Funding History / Additional Information:

Sec1 Ch16 SLA2013 P64 L27 SB 18 \$7,500,000

Project Description/Justification:

The first phase of this project began in FY2014, with projects fielded statewide to initiate estimation of adult escapement, stock-specific harvests, and juvenile smolt abundance for those indicator stocks with gaps in information in these areas. The department also initiated investigations of local and traditional knowledge, a nearshore marine survey, and provided funding to the University of Alaska to study life history processes in Chinook salmon. Continuation of funding in FY2015 and beyond is required to successfully field these and the remaining projects to fill significant gaps in our knowledge of Chinook salmon statewide.

Chinook salmon are critically important to subsistence, sport, and commercial users, and to communities and economies across Alaska. Recent downturns in productivity and abundance of Chinook salmon across the state and the resulting hardships have highlighted the significant need for the department to better understand and characterize the changing productivity and abundance trends for Chinook salmon and to identify actions that could be taken to lessen the hardships experienced by Alaskans that use and depend on this resource.

To address the decline, the department tasked a team of agency scientists and researchers with developing a comprehensive Chinook salmon research plan to address knowledge gaps and research needs. They conducted a comprehensive review of Chinook salmon programs and developed a report entitled "Alaska Chinook Salmon Knowledge Gaps and Needs" (Gap Analysis) to identify existing knowledge gaps, identify activities that could be undertaken to narrow those gaps, and identify the range of potential costs associated. The department hosted the Chinook Salmon Symposium in October 2012, and invited state, federal, and academic scientists and the public, to discuss and further identify knowledge gaps and compile a list of research priorities to address specific questions informing observations of Chinook salmon abundance and productivity in Alaska. Results from the Gap Analysis, discussion at the Chinook Salmon Symposium, and comments received on the Gap Analysis were combined to develop the Chinook salmon research plan. Documents are available online at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=chinook_efforts_symposium_information

This project will fund the next phase of activities identified as needed by the Chinook salmon research plan and initiated in the first phase during FY2014. The plan is structured on a stock-specific, life-history basis for twelve indicator stocks from Southeast Alaska to the Arctic. These stocks include: Unuk, Stikine, Taku, Chilkat, Copper, Susitna, Kenai, Karluk, Chignik, Nushagak, Kuskokwim, and Yukon. Stock assessments to be funded include, for these stocks, a complete assessment of adult escapement and stock-specific harvests in all relevant fisheries, assessment of juvenile Chinook salmon smolt, local and traditional knowledge studies, nearshore marine surveys, and life history process studies.

This project is closely aligned with the department's top two core services of management and stock assessment and research.