



February 8, 2024

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Boards Support Section
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Re: Opposition to Proposal 43

Dear Chair Wood and Members of the Alaska Board of Fisheries,

OBI Seafoods operates ten shore-based processing plants across Alaska. Our company has over 110 years of history in Alaska seafood processing. Sustainable salmon stocks are the single most important issue to the long-term viability of our company and the ability to maintain our industry's contribution to the state economy. We are steadfast supporters of Alaska's hatchery programs which have provided for Alaska's fisheries for nearly fifty years and appreciate their mission to coincide without adversely affecting salmon stocks.

We are writing to express our strong opposition to Proposal 43, which seeks to significantly reduce pink salmon production. As advocates for sustainable fisheries management and economic prosperity of coastal communities, we believe that Proposal 43 presents substantial risks to Alaska's salmon hatchery programs and the diverse stakeholders they serve.

Commercial fisheries are not the only benefactors of hatcheries

Hatchery programs encompass a wide array of benefits that resonate across diverse user groups within Alaska's communities. Whether it be subsistence, personal use, sport, or commercial fishing, hatchery-produced salmon plays an integral role in meeting the needs and preferences of each user group. By ensuring the consistent availability of hatchery-origin salmon, these programs facilitate equitable access to this invaluable resource, regardless of the fishing style or purpose.

Hatcheries are responsibly managed

Responsible management lies at the core of Alaska's salmon hatchery program, underlined by stringent oversight and regulation administered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG). Through meticulous attention to detail and adherence to scientific principles, the ADFG ensures that hatchery operations are conducted with the utmost care and consideration for environmental sustainability.

At the heart of this management approach is a commitment to data-driven decision-making, where scientific research and empirical evidence serve as guiding principles in shaping policy and operational protocols. By leveraging cutting-edge research methodologies and monitoring techniques, the ADFG gains valuable insights into the ecological dynamics of salmon populations, allowing for informed assessments of hatchery practices and their broader impacts on marine ecosystems.

Additionally, the ADFG's oversight extends beyond compliance with regulatory standards; it also includes a public process via their hatchery Regional Planning Teams. Through ongoing collaboration with industry stakeholders, community members, and scientific institutions, the ADFG fosters a culture of dialogue and



collaboration aimed at refining management strategies and enhancing the overall effectiveness of hatchery operations.

Hatcheries reduce pressure on wild stocks

Hatcheries play a pivotal role in alleviating pressure on wild salmon stocks, especially during periods of reduced abundance or environmental challenges. By supplementing natural populations with hatchery-produced salmon, hatcheries effectively mitigate the strain on wild stocks and help maintain the delicate balance of ecosystems. This supplementation strategy not only bolsters the overall abundance of salmon but also provides a crucial buffer against fluctuations in natural populations caused by factors like habitat degradation, climate change, and predation.

Salmon produced by hatcheries are sustainable and RFM and MSC Certified

The certification and sustainability of Alaska's salmon fisheries, encompassing both wild-caught and hatchery-origin salmon, represent a testament to the state's commitment to responsible resource management. This commitment is exemplified by the consistent recognition received from esteemed programs such as Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC).

These certifications serve as external validations of Alaska's fisheries management practices, providing a seal of approval that underscores the dedication to sustainable harvesting and environmental stewardship. The acknowledgment of both wild and hatchery-origin salmon within these certifications reflects a comprehensive approach to fisheries management that recognizes the interconnectedness of natural and hatchery-supplemented stocks.

In conclusion, Alaska's salmon hatchery program stands as a shining example of responsible resource management and sustainable salmon harvests that profoundly benefit all Alaskans. Through decades of meticulous oversight and dedication to scientific principles, the state has fostered a robust hatchery system that not only supplements wild salmon populations but also contributes to the economic vitality and cultural heritage of coastal communities. By fostering dialogue and cooperation among industry leaders, government agencies, and local communities, Alaska can chart a course towards a future where salmon populations thrive, and coastal economies flourish.

Thank you,

John Hanrahan
OBI, CEO