

Pacific Salmon Commission, Northern Fund Final Report

**Northern & Transboundary Sockeye Salmon Matched
Scale-Tissue Sampling – Final Report for Northern
Fund, COOP-18-089; NF-2018-I-6**

By

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and

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July 2019

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Division of Commercial Fisheries



***PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION, NORTHERN FUND FINAL
REPORT***

**NORTHERN & TRANSBOUNDARY SOCKEYE SALMON MATCHED
SCALE-TISSUE SAMPLING YEAR 11**

(COOP-18-089; NF-2018-I-6)

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ABSTRACT

Correct estimates of the Nass, Skeena, Stikine, and Taku River sockeye salmon contribution to the commercial catch in Southeast Alaska must be calculated to fulfill Pacific Salmon Treaty harvest-sharing agreements. Matched sockeye salmon scale and tissue samples for stock identification analyses were collected from the weekly harvests in the 2018 and early 2019 Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fishing districts 101, 106, 108, and purse seine fisheries in districts 101, 102, 103, and 104. A total of 20,696 matched samples were collected from July 1–August 31, 2018 and 1,254 matched samples were collected from June 1–June 30, 2019. These matched samples will be used to determine the age composition (scales), hatchery contribution (otoliths), and stock composition proportions (DNA) of the sockeye caught in commercial net fisheries in Southeast Alaska.

Key words: sockeye salmon, *Oncorhynchus nerka*, matched biological sampling, scale pattern analysis, Southeast Alaska, Canada, Northern Boundary Area, Transboundary Area

INTRODUCTION

Provisions of the 2009 Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) specify abundance-based harvest sharing agreements for Canadian Nass and Skeena River and Transboundary Stikine River and Taku River sockeye salmon in selected Southeast Alaska fisheries. In these fisheries the United States is allowed to harvest a fixed percentage of the return of Nass, Skeena, Stikine, and Taku sockeye stocks. Accurate estimates of the catch of these stocks of sockeye salmon in all United States and Canadian commercial fisheries is required, along with escapement estimates, to calculate their total return, and the percentage of that return caught in treaty-limited fisheries.

In the District 104 purse seine fishery, prior to statistical week 31 (late July), the United States is allowed to harvest 2.45% of the combined AAH of Nass and Skeena River sockeye salmon returns (Figure 1). In the District 101 gillnet fishery the United States is allowed to harvest 13.8% of the Annual Allowable Harvest (AAH) of Nass River sockeye stocks (Figure 2). In the Southeast Alaska fishing Districts 106 and 108 the United States is allowed to harvest 50% of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of Stikine River sockeye salmon each week as determined by the pre-season forecast and in-season model (Figure 3). In Southeast Alaska fishing District 111 the PST specifies that the United States and Canada will manage the return of Taku River sockeye to ensure that each country obtains catches equivalent to their share of wild sockeye and a 50% share of enhanced sockeye (Figure 4). The relative strength of the wild and enhanced returns of sockeye salmon need to be assessed in season by inspecting otoliths for thermal marks to avoid over-harvest of wild stocks.

In the District 106, 108 and 111 gillnet fisheries the United States is allowed to harvest 50% of the annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of Stikine River wild and enhanced sockeye salmon. Significant numbers of enhanced sockeye propagated under treaty agreement are caught in the District 106, 108 and 111 gillnet fisheries and the relative strength of the wild and enhanced returns need to be assessed in season by inspecting otoliths for thermal marks to avoid over-harvest of wild stocks.

In 1982 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game conducted a study to determine if scale pattern analysis (SPA) of sockeye salmon scales was useful in discriminating stocks harvested in Southeast Alaska (Marshall, 1984).

Results of this study showed that SPA could accurately distinguish sockeye scales. From 1982–2010 the catch of Canadian Nass and Skeena sockeye salmon in the District 101, 106, and 108 gillnet fisheries and the Districts 101-104 purse seine fisheries has been estimated using scale pattern analysis (SPA). SPA has also been used from 1982–2011 to estimate the catch of Transboundary Stikine River sockeye salmon in the District 106 and 108 gillnet fisheries and the catch of Transboundary Taku River sockeye salmon in the District 111 gillnet fishery.

Scale pattern stock identification analysis of sockeye salmon, primarily based on patterns of freshwater rearing growth, can only identify relatively large groups of stocks; e.g. Alaska, Nass, Skeena, and Stikine. Scale analysis is not cost effective, is labor intensive, time consuming and requires yearly sampling of escapements to form an annual baseline which precludes its use in-season. These and other problems in accurately estimating stock-specific catches and total returns of sockeye salmon resulted in an extensive investigation by the Northern Boundary Technical Committee (NBTC) of the run reconstruction modeling process currently used. The NBTC concluded that improved stock identification techniques capable of accurately estimating specific groups of stocks are needed to accurately evaluate effectiveness of and improve, if possible, existing run reconstruction methods.

Genetic Stock Identification (GSI) analyses are a powerful and well documented technology. Various types of genetic stock identification techniques, including mitochondrial (mDNA) and single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) analyses, have demonstrated accuracy in estimating the contribution of specific sockeye salmon stocks to mixed stock fisheries in Southeast Alaska and northern British Columbia. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) started using mixed stock analysis (MSA) based on genetic markers as a marine stock identification tool in 1996. This method has been used along with SPA for stock separation of Canadian Nass and Skeena in-river fisheries and DFO has a long-term plan to use MSA solely in their analysis. Matched scale-tissue samples have allowed side-by-side comparison of GSI and SPA based stock identification estimates in Southeast Alaska fisheries. This will be useful in indexing the new GSI estimates to the SPA estimates which go back to 1982 and were used in calculating the current harvest sharing agreements.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to representatively collect matched scale and tissue samples from sockeye that were commercially harvested each statistical week from the Districts 101, 106, 108 and 111 gillnet fisheries, the District 182-30 set gillnet fishery, and the Districts 101, 102, 103, and 104 purse seine fisheries. Matched samples are required for several PST related stock identification projects including: 1) Boundary Area Alaska-Nass-Skeena run reconstruction, 2) McDonald Lake run reconstruction, 3) Stikine River run reconstruction, and 4) Taku-Snettisham run reconstruction. Scales were used for age composition and DNA tissues were used for stock identification. Otoliths were used in-season to estimate the relative strength of wild and enhanced McDonald, Taku, Snettisham, and Stikine sockeye returns.

This report covers only matched sampling collection as performed by the Alaska Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries Port Sampling Project. GSI and otolith analysis are separate projects.

METHODS

ADF&G commercial port samplers were stationed onboard tenders buying fish on the fishing grounds and in port during dockside deliveries in Ketchikan, Petersburg, Wrangell, and Juneau. Port samplers determined where a specific boat was fishing or from what fishing districts a tender bought fish and collected up to 40 sockeye salmon from each boat or up to 200 from a tender.

Port samplers also collected biological data from each fish, including scale samples, sex, and an axillary fin clip. A measurement (nearest 5mm mid-eye to fork) was collected for a sub-set of fish that were sampled. Scale samples were collected from the left side of the fish; two rows above the lateral line on the diagonal from the posterior insertion of the dorsal fin to the anterior insertion of the anal fin. Scales were mounted on gum cards with forceps. Scale samples were sent to the ADF&G Region 1 Scale Aging Laboratory in Douglas weekly for age processing. Impressions of the scales were made in cellulose acetate. Scale impressions were then examined under moderate (70x) magnification to determine age. Criteria used to assign ages were similar to those of Mosher (1968), and ages were reported in European notation (Koo 1962).

For those sockeye salmon sampled from fishing Districts 106-41, 108, and 111 port samplers applied a uniquely numbered six-digit coordination tag to the fish head so it could later be collected in a processing plant. The six-digit coordination tag number was recorded in the right margin of the ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Age-Sex-Length (ASL) form and on the back of the form for upload into the ADF&G Southeast Region database. Tagged heads were recovered at processing plants and shipped to the ADF&G Thermal Mark Laboratory in Juneau for otolith extraction and processing. The coordination tag number linked the otolith tray and specimen numbers to the scale and DNA specimens.

Approximately 0.5-1 inch of the axillary process or “spine” located above the pelvic fin was collected for DNA from each sockeye using clippers. Each axillary process was placed on a 40 grid Whatman card and then placed in a pelican case with desiccant packs to quickly dry out the samples. The Whatman card and individual grid number was recorded next to the corresponding coordination tag number on the ADF&G Matched Sample Form. The Whatman card number was entered into the ADF&G Region database by technicians working in the Douglas Scale Aging Laboratory on a weekly basis. The DNA tissue samples were processed and analyzed by the ADF&G Gene Conservation Laboratory and the Auke Bay Laboratories/Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute.

RESULTS

A total of 21,950 matched scale-tissue samples were collected from July 1, 2018- June 30, 2019 (Tables 1-9). Weekly sampling goals were sometimes not achieved due to low catches or catches from different fisheries being mixed onboard fish tenders before being delivered to processors. District specific purse seine samples are particularly difficult to obtain since numerous areas are open at the same time and seiners move between areas frequently seeking concentrations of fish resulting in mixed sub-area deliveries in port.

DISCUSSION

Pacific Salmon Treaty based harvest sharing agreements were renewed in 2009 for the Northern Boundary area fisheries Alaska District 104 purse seine, Alaska District 101 drift gillnet, Canadian Area 3 net, and Canadian Area 1 troll. The agreements are “abundance based” where the allowable harvest is a percentage of the Annual Allowable Harvest (AAH).

The District 104 purse seine fishery opens by regulation on the first Sunday in July. In 2018, the first potential opening was July 1 (week 27), but due to Skeena River sockeye salmon concerns ADF&G kept the fishery closed for the first two weeks of the season. The pre-week 31 fishing plan for District 104 was based on the pre-season Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) forecast returns of approximately 1,030,000 Nass and Skeena sockeye salmon (2018 Northern Boundary Technical Committee Bilateral Report in prep).

In the District 101 (Tree Point) drift gillnet fishery, the AAH is calculated as the total run of Nass sockeye salmon minus either the escapement requirement of 200,000 or the actual in-river

escapement, whichever is less. The agreement specifies a harvest of 13.8 percent of the AAH of the Nass River sockeye salmon run. The return of Nass sockeye salmon was forecast at 377,000 in 2018 which, minus an escapement goal of 200,000, would result in an AAH of about 177,000 fish. Using this forecast, the 2018 allowable harvest in the District 101 drift gillnet fishery was approximately 24,426 Nass River sockeye salmon. A total of 19,920 sockeye salmon were harvested, which was only 17% of the 1985-2017 average of 114,656 fish and was the lowest harvest since the inception of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The preliminary estimate of Nass River sockeye salmon harvested in the District 101 drift gillnet fishery in 2018 was 11,270 fish (2018 Northern Boundary Technical Committee Bilateral Report in prep).

In 2018 and June 2019 progress in achieving sampling goals, sample quality control, and the quality of record keeping necessary to match stock composition estimates, were monitored daily by port sampling supervisors in Juneau, Ketchikan and Petersburg and on a weekly basis by the regional data coordinator and project supervisor in Juneau. Representative sampling of the landed catch was assured by: 1) sampling landings in Petersburg, Wrangell, Ketchikan, Juneau, and Yakutat; 2) collecting no more than 40 samples from individual fishing boat deliveries or 200 from individual tender deliveries; 3) placing samplers onboard vessels purchasing fish on the grounds to obtain unmixed sub district specific samples; 4) sampling throughout the duration of each weekly opening; and 5) interviewing vessel personnel and checking fish tickets to assure that all fish onboard were caught in the targeted fishery.

Replacement of SPA with an accurate, genetically based, stock identification techniques has facilitated: 1) reduced sampling costs since the annual baseline escapement samples needed for scale analysis will no longer be needed; 2) much finer resolution of individual stocks allowing stock specific migratory routing and timing studies; 3) the potential for in season stock identification analyses which cannot be done with scale analysis because the baseline samples required cannot be collected until early fall; 4) stock specific spawner-recruit analyses; and 5) providing managers with the ability to shift time and area openings to access surplus stocks or avoid weak stocks.

The negotiated percentages of the annual allowable harvest of Nass and Skeena sockeye that can be taken in Alaska's District 101 gillnet and 104 purse seine fisheries are based on average interception rates in these fisheries estimated by scale pattern analyses between 1985 and 1997. Matched scale-tissue samples allowed direct comparison of the two techniques which provided researchers the ability to determine if any apparent changes in interception rates were real or are due to differences in estimates produced by the two techniques. The comparison of both scale patterns analysis and DNA for years 2004-2008 is complete and digitizing of sockeye scales collected in Southeast Alaska Districts 101-104, 106, 108 and 111 ceased following the 2009 collection year.

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Table 1.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for stock identification analysis from Alaska’s District 101 gillnet fishery July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
7-Jul-18	27	2,163	261
14-Jul-18	28	1,443	260
21-Jul-18	29	585	223
28-Jul-18	30	1,966	260
4-Aug-18	31	2,523	260
11-Aug-18	32	5,197	260
18-Aug-18	33	1,888	253
25-Aug-18	34	446	183
1-Sep-18	35	1,144	260
22-Jun-19	25	512	260
29-Jun-19	26	1,449	260
Total		19,316	2,740

Table 2.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for stock identification analysis from Alaska’s District 106 gillnet fishery July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
7-Jul-18	27	2,097	197
14-Jul-18	28	2,937	380
21-Jul-18	29	2,647	471
28-Jul-18	30	3,817	600
4-Aug-18	31	3,569	602
11-Aug-18	32	3,002	600
18-Aug-18	33	2,367	515
25-Aug-18	34	1,423	370
1-Sep-18	35	733	375
22-Jun-19	25	288	1
29-Jun-19	26	1,018	9
Grand Total		23,898	4,120

Table 3.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for stock identification analysis from Alaska’s District 108 gillnet fishery July 1, 2018–June 30th, 2019.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
7-Jul-18	27	1,276	60
14-Jul-18	28	1,404	302
21-Jul-18	29	1,184	421
28-Jul-18	30	1,125	310
4-Aug-18	31	404	148
11-Aug-18	32	212	199
18-Aug-18	33	63	3
25-Aug-18	34	17	9
1-Sep-18	35	30	0
29-Jun-19	26	1,311	318
Grand Total		7,026	1,770

Table 4.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for stock identification analysis from Alaska’s District 111 gillnet fishery July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
7-Jul-18	27	1,721	334
14-Jul-18	28	6,208	476
21-Jul-18	29	17,058	908
28-Jul-18	30	18,588	400
4-Aug-18	31	9,934	400
11-Aug-18	32	8,199	45
18-Aug-18	33	2,172	55
25-Aug-18	34	1,789	328
1-Sep-18	35	899	300
22-Jun-19	25	191	41
29-Jun-19	26	346	245
Grand Total		67,105	3,532

Table 5.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for scale pattern analysis from Alaska’s District 101 purse seine fishery July 2018–August 2018.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
7-Jul-18	27	259	105
14-Jul-18	28	394	80
21-Jul-18	29	673	147
28-Jul-18	30	2,067	295
4-Aug-18	31	3,883	289
11-Aug-18	32	11,939	340
18-Aug-18	33	3,778	300

Grand Totals	22,993	1,556
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Table 6.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for scale pattern analysis from Alaska’s District 102 purse seine fishery July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
7-Jul-18	27	1,033	261
14-Jul-18	28	533	193
21-Jul-18	29	3,710	280
28-Jul-18	30	4,691	300
4-Aug-18	31	3,139	40
11-Aug-18	32	3,471	244
18-Aug-18	33	5,470	260
22-Jun-19	25	50	26
29-Jun-19	26	248	94
Grand Total		22,345	1,698

Table 7.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for scale pattern analysis from Alaska’s District 103 purse seine fishery July–August 2018.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
28-Jul-18	30	1,120	151
4-Aug-18	31	2,860	320
11-Aug-18	32	4,876	480
18-Aug-18	33	3,123	232
25-Aug-18	34	4,658	57
Grand Total		16,637	1,240

Table 8.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for scale pattern analysis from Alaska’s District 104 purse seine fishery July–August 2018.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
21-Jul-18	29	7,558	477
28-Jul-18	30	12,185	440
4-Aug-18	31	3,758	400
11-Aug-18	32	10,770	260
18-Aug-18	33	10,557	40
25-Aug-18	34	76,537	400
Grand Total		121,365	2,017

Table 9.—Weekly matched scale-tissue samples collected for scale pattern analysis from Alaska’s District 182-30 set gillnet fishery July–August 2018. There was no setnet fishery in week 29.

Week Ending	Statistical Week	Sockeye Catch	Matched Scale-Tissue Samples
14-Jul-18	28	397	120
28-Jul-18	30	471	90
4-Aug-18	31	86	28
11-Aug-18	32	22	12
Grand Total		976	250

Table 10.—Age composition of sockeye salmon scale samples collected from July 2018–September 2018 in Southeast Alaska net fisheries (ages for late June 2019 samples are pending).

District		0.2	0.3	0.4	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.2	3.3
Drift Gillnet	101	33	50	4	0	479	330	7	0	446	431	2	2	1
	106	26	49	0	0	2,024	0	41	1	276	219	4	11	7
	108	26	62	1	0	3,322	455	10	0	44	76	2	2	2
	111	152	171	5	0	1,670	798	12	0	22	51	1	0	0
Purse Seine	101	16	7	0	8	797	75	4	14	133	54	0	1	0
	102	8	9	0	9	940	236	6	4	99	62	2	3	1
	103	0	0	0	25	645	94	6	6	110	43	1	0	0
	104	0	5	0	5	1,233	11	0	7	151	67	1	1	1
Set Gillnet	182-30	9	1	1	0	193	58	2	0	4	10	0	0	0

Figure 1.—Geographic location of the ADF&G commercial purse seine fisheries in district 101-114.

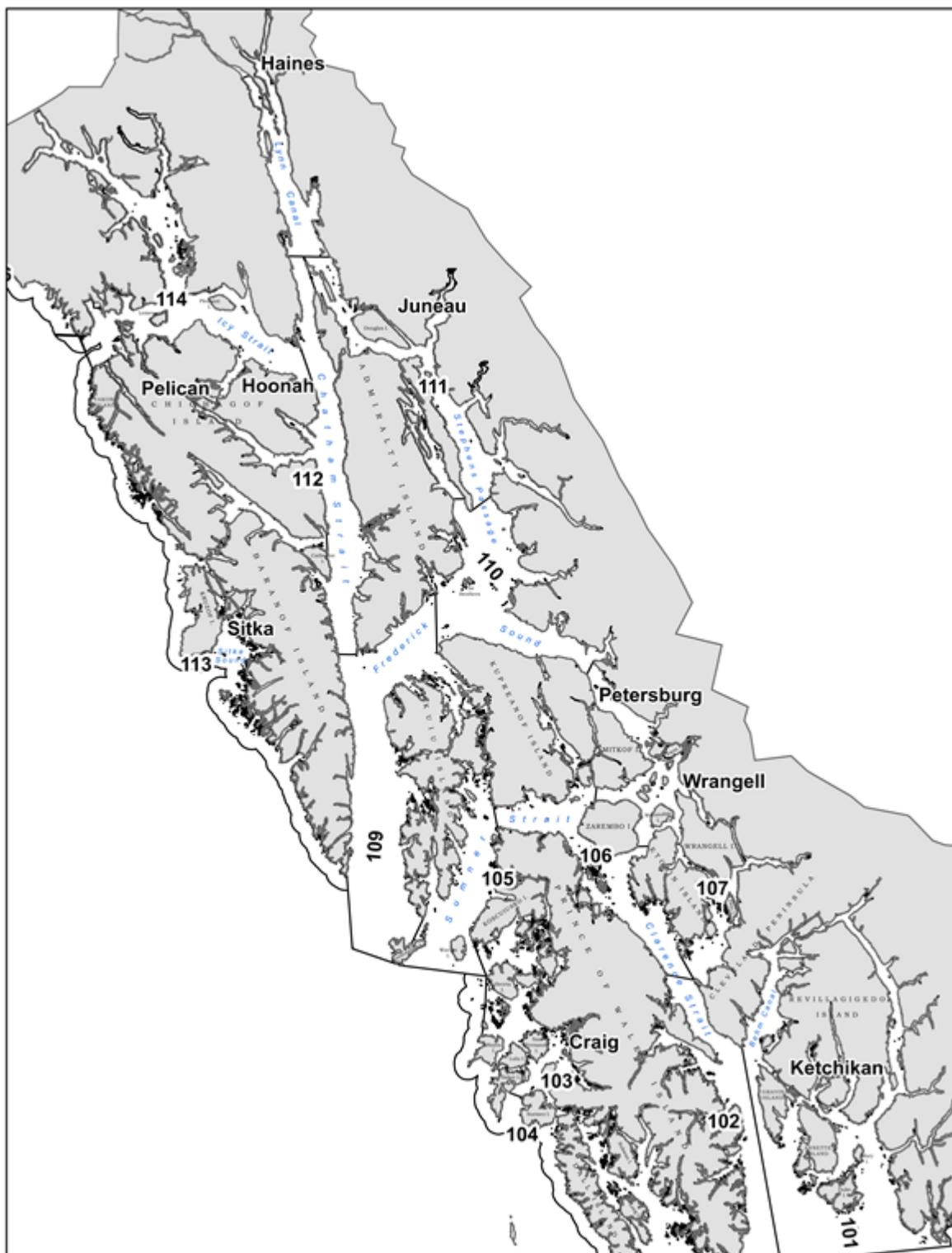


Figure 2.—Geographic location of the ADF&G commercial drift gillnet fishery in district 101-11.

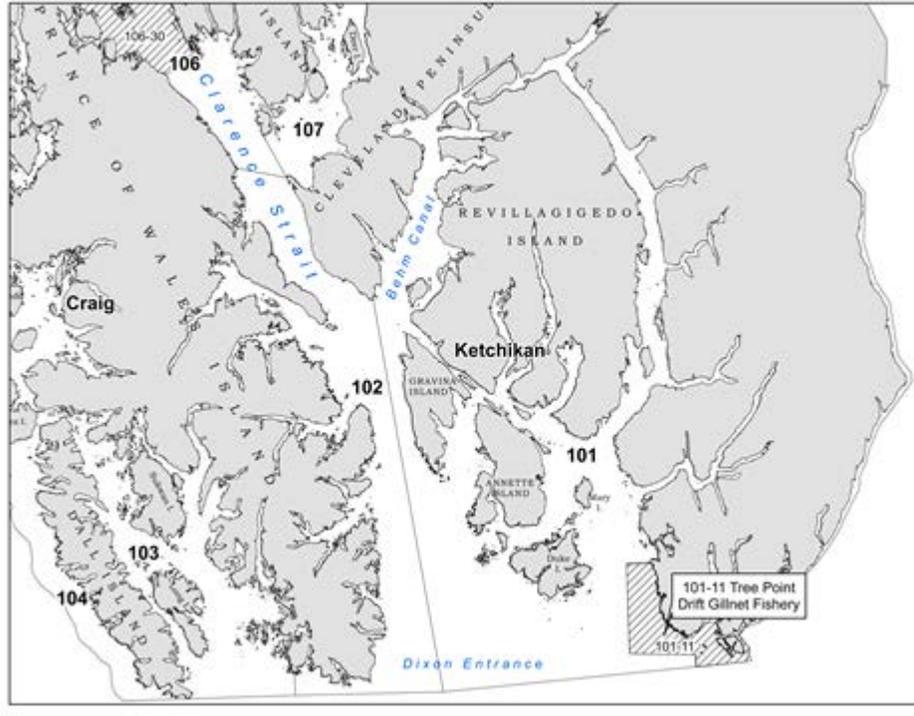


Figure 3.—Geographic location of ADF&G commercial drift gillnet fishery in districts 106 and 108.

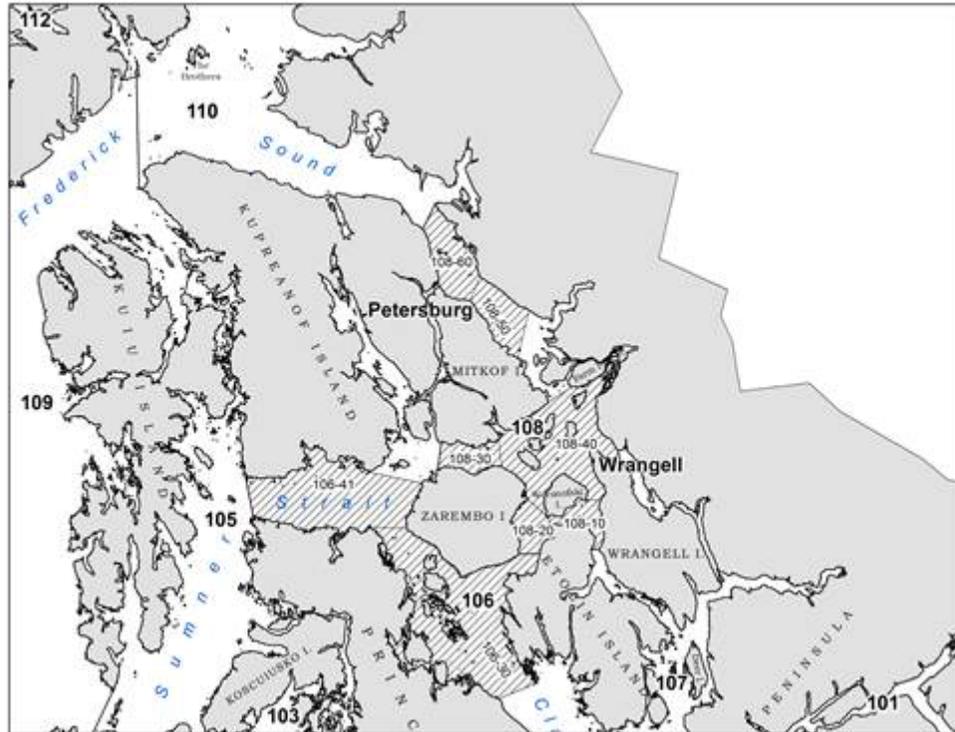
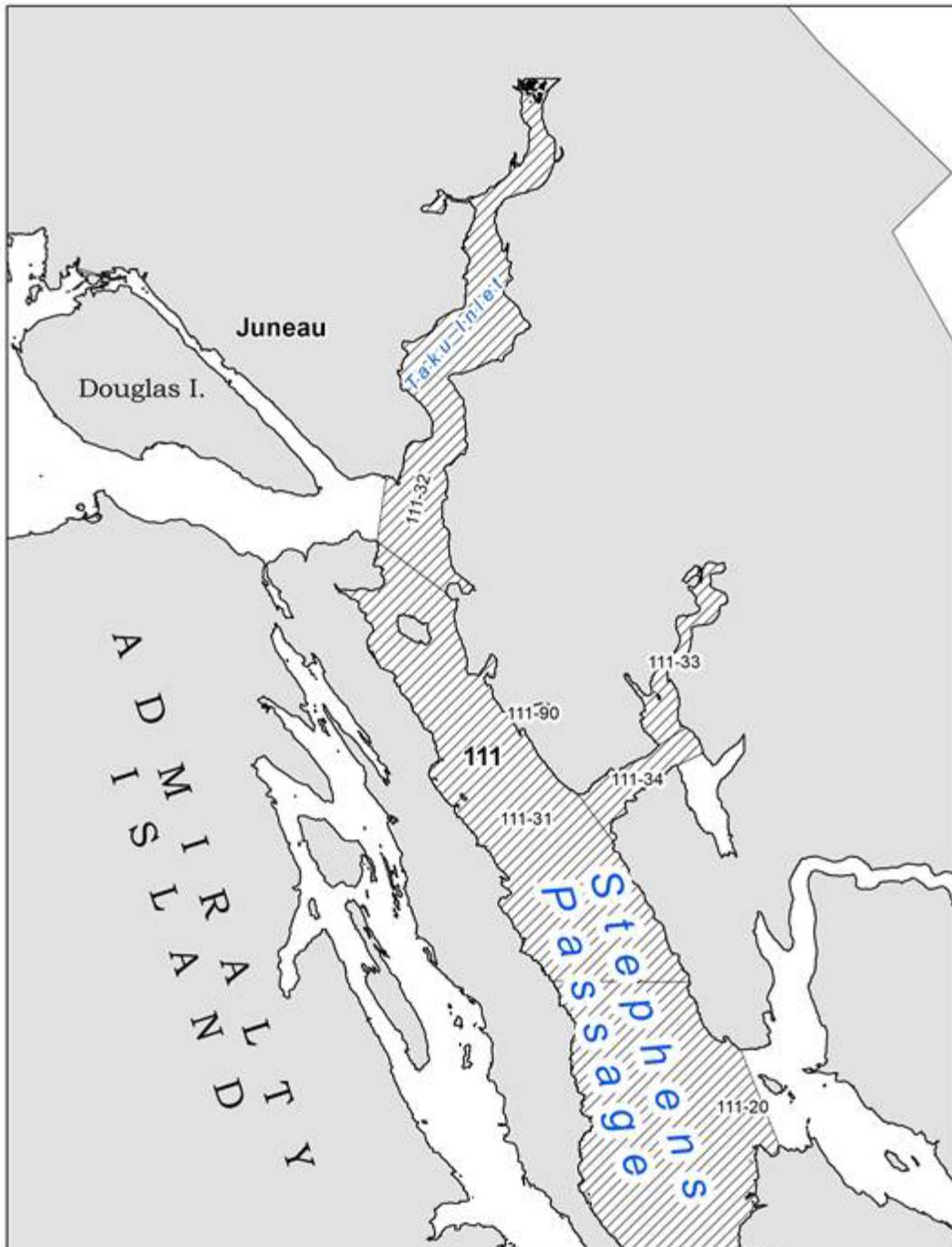


Figure 4.—Geographic location of ADF&G commercial drift gillnet fishery in district 111.



BUDGET SUMMARY

The budget allocation for this project was as follows:

Salary for ADF&G port sampling personnel:	\$193,678
Travel; to/from Juneau, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Wrangell	\$2,060
Contractual; pay to tenders for onboard samplers, cell phone charges, shipping, etc.	\$9,900
Supplies; raingear, forms, tags, gloves, etc.	\$3,716
Subtotal Direct	\$209,354
ADF&G Overhead: $\$209,354 \times 22.74\%$	\$44,255
TOTAL	\$253,609

Total direct project expenditures by Alaska Fish and Game have not been calculated at the time of this report. All project expenditures by Alaska Fish and Game were for personnel, travel, contractual and commodities related to matched sample collection in Ketchikan, Petersburg, Wrangell, and Juneau as well as project supervision from Juneau. ADF&G personnel coded to this project included: 1) Antonio Florendo, Iris Frank, Gabriel Cohen and Esther Bower; Juneau port sampling and Region 1 Scale Laboratory 2) Stephanie Cartwright, Andrea Gillen, Anna Allen, Shannon Nore, and Jordan Veelle; Wrangell port sampling; 3) Mena Heinl, Jill Walker, Isaiah Navales, Mathew Standley and Kia Arnold; Ketchikan port sampling, 4) Laura Slaught, Erica Ebert, Brandon Ware, Vittoria DeAngelis, Avery Skeek, and Grace Mikkelsen; Petersburg port sampling.