

**Department of Fish and Game  
FY25 Midyear Status Report**

Item No.	Appropriation / Allocation	Description	Amount / Fund Source	LFD Questions
1	Various	Increased Cost of Services Due to Inflation	\$800.0 Gen Fund (UGF) Inc	<p>Has added funding for inflation proven sufficient to address the increase costs of services and travel? If not, in which areas (regional, programmatic, or items of expenditure) has the funding fallen short and why?</p> <p>What was the impact of not having supplemental funding for inflation in FY24?</p>
<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>This is dependent on the specific division and section. For the Division of Commercial Fisheries, the division received an unallocated decrement of \$716.5 in the FY25 budget, which significantly impacted their budget and ability to meet inflationary and program costs. This resulted in elimination of some projects and reduction of other projects. This said, the division was able to maintain most existing operations.</p> <p>For the Division of Sport Fish Anchorage and Fairbanks Hatcheries, the \$350.0 is sufficient funding for utility increases so far in FY25.</p> <p>For the Board Support Section, the \$15.0 was sufficient to offset the rising costs associated with travel related to regularly scheduled board meetings.</p> <p>We are currently reviewing our mid-year budgets for the upcoming supplemental request deadline. To date, given the \$800 K provided and that supplemental funding has been provided to cover pay increases, ADF&amp;G has not experienced a significant impact of not having supplemental funding for inflation but seen an impact related to the decrement that the Division of Commercial Fisheries received.</p>				
2	Commercial Fisheries / Various	Add Administrative Support in the Commercial Fisheries Division	\$175.0 Gen Fund (UGF) 2 PFT Positions Inc	<p>The agency added an Administrative Assistant 1 in the Southeast Region and an Accounting Technician 1 in the Arctic Yukon Kuskokwim Region (in addition to reclassifying an Accounting Technician 2 to a 3).</p> <p>Were these positions filled as planned, and if so when? How has this allowed the agency to shift the workload of related positions?</p>
<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>The Division of Commercial Fisheries is finalizing the position descriptions. Once the position descriptions have been approved, the division will begin recruiting for the new positions. The reclass of the existing position has been submitted and is awaiting approval. The process of establishing and filling the new positions has been delayed by increases in existing staff workloads and loss of some existing staff.</p>				

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3	Commercial Fisheries / Various	Add Authority to Contract with Non-State Entities to Fund Agency Surveys and Projects that Would Not Otherwise Occur	\$400.0 Stat Desig (Other) Inc	<p>Please describe the projects funded by this SDPR authority and provide an update on the activities and research involved for each project. Feel free to attach summaries with this as well.</p> <p>Pacific Salmon Commission Northern Fund projects: \$200.0 Red king crab surveys supported by the North Pacific Research Board: \$100.0 Kelp genetics project/Southeast Conference: \$100.0</p>
<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>The listed projects were existing projects that needed additional authority to maintain operations. Please see the attached summary of the listed projects.</p> <p><b>Please see Attachment 1</b></p>				
4	Commercial Fisheries / Central Region Fisheries Management	Coho Salmon Genetic Testing of Upper Cook Inlet Commercial Harvest (FY25-FY30)	\$300.0 Gen Fund (UGF) IncT	<p>Was the agency able to expand coho genetic testing in the Upper Cook Inlet with this funding at the end of the 2024 season, or will that begin in 2025? How will this information build from testing funded by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough between 2012 and 2015?</p> <p>How will this additional information be used?</p>
<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>This new study will provide stock specific harvest estimates for coho salmon taken in the UCI drift gillnet and set gillnet commercial fisheries; however, ADF&amp;G has not yet determined the full scope. FY2025 funding is being used for project planning, which will be completed this fiscal year. Project operations are in the process of being established. Additionally, sampling locations, frequencies, and priorities must still be determined as well as the development of an operational plan with study objectives.</p> <p>Operations are expected to start in calendar year 2025 and proceed annually in subsequent years contingent on continued funding. Seasonal operational periods are tentatively mid-July through the end of August. Results of the project will likely be summarized post season after analysis and review are completed.</p>				

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5	Commercial Fisheries / Central Region Fisheries Management	Add Three Seasonal Fish and Wildlife Tech Positions to Support the Chelatna Lake Weir	\$85.0 Gen Fund (UGF) 3 PPT Positions Inc	What is the status of the Chelatna Lake Weir - was it operated in 2024, and if so, for how long? Was the agency able to fill the three seasonal positions, or will this work begin in 2025?
<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>Seasonal preparations typically begin in March and April with hiring staff and procurement of equipment. With the timing of the new fiscal year starting each July, new or reinstated seasonal projects typically cannot get up and running the same summer in which funding is first provided. Because of this, the Chelatna Weir was not operated in 2024. The \$85.0 UGF for three seasonal positions and the \$45.0 UGF in startup costs will be utilized in preparing for and during the beginning of the field season next year but before the start of the next fiscal year on July 1, 2025.</p> <p>It is important to note that the Division of Commercial Fisheries has requested an increment in FY2026 to replace \$716.5 in funding that was cut from the FY2025 budget. If the division does not receive this funding back to its base budget, it will not be able to operate the Chelatna or Judd Lake weirs, among other projects, during the 2025 season.</p>				
6	Commercial Fisheries / Westward Region Fisheries Management	GA 3/13 Restore Test Fishery Receipt Authority	\$1,000.0 Test Fish (DGF) Inc	Was the agency able to engage in these test fisheries as anticipated, and how did any resulting revenue compare to the current level of receipt authority? If receipts fall short, will the agency need supplemental funding to maintain service levels in the Westward Region?
<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>In FY2025, the region was able to engage in test fishery operations and meet the full amount of test fishery authority. The budget for Bering Sea Aleutian Island crab programs is primarily composed of three parts: Test Fishery Receipts, a Crab Rationalization reimbursement grant, and a federal research grant. All three funding sources are important to maintain the programs. The reimbursement grant funding has decreased substantially because of the reduction in collected taxes. To accommodate reductions in the Crab Rationalization reimbursement grant, the Division of Commercial Fisheries is utilizing the Test Fishery Receipts. This grant can be a difficult funding mechanism as the amount received is uncertain and comes in late in the year. The fisheries are rebounding, but the reduction in grant funding is anticipated to continue over the next couple of years.</p>				

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7	Commercial Fisheries / Statewide Fisheries Management	Alleviate Shortfall in Commercial Crew Member License Receipts	Total: (\$716.5) \$783.5 Gen Fund (UGF) (\$1,500.0) GF/Prgm (DGF) Dec	<p>How did this net reduction affect agency operations and management? Please provide an update listing any projects or assessments that did not occur in 2024 and are not planned for 2025 as the result of this decrement.</p> <p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>A fund swap from Southeast region allowed for \$66.2 to be reallocated to cover some of this reduction. In the Central region, the Prince William Sound trawl survey for Tanner crab abundance will not occur in 2025; the Togiak Herring assessment will not be conducted in 2025 resulting in lower guideline harvest level; and the Judd and Chelatna Lake weirs assessing Upper Cook Inlet/Susitna sockeye salmon stock status were not operated in 2024 and will not operate in 2025 if the division does not receive the requested FY26 increment to restore \$716.5 in funding to the divisions base budget.</p> <p>In the AYK region, the Kotzebue Area Kobuk River Test Fish program has been discontinued starting in the 2024 season; the Yukon River Test fishery program was significantly scaled back in the 2024 fall season, which will continue for both summer and fall season test fish operations starting the 2025 season; and either the Bethel Test Fishery program or the Yukon Sonar extension program will be discontinued starting the 2025 season as well.</p> <p>In the Westward region, an administrative assistant position was left vacant that resulted in delays in travel approvals and reimbursements. The position is also responsible for responding to calls from the public, resulting in a decrease in this service as well. The Sandy River weir is an important monitoring project, but without funding for FY25 it will not operate.</p>
8	Commercial Fisheries / Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission	Sec 38(a), HB268 - Contract Services for Tech Upgrade for In-House Applications (FY2025-FY2027)	\$450.0 CFEC Rcpts (DGF) MultiYr	<p>What is the status of the technology upgrades at the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission? Will additional funding or time be necessary to complete those projects? Does the agency anticipate that the work will be completed by the end of FY27?</p>

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8	<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>CFEC’s IT modernization project is moving quickly with a combination of in-house staff and contractual services. The main IT systems are fast-tracked to turnover by the end of FY25. This includes the in-house licensing and online permit renewal systems. CFEC is prioritizing the turnover of these key systems because the current legacy hardware is very old and must be replaced, and that can only be done by migrating to a new system. Following FY25, CFEC will continue to replace its other IT services, including its research platform and code used to generate reports, web services, and the commission’s adjudications decision database. We remain in touch with OIT’s Security Office and are working quickly to fortify our systems. We anticipate completion before the end of FY27 and, at this juncture, do not project a need for additional resources.</p>			
9	Various	Fish and Game Fund	n/a	What is the status of the Fish and Game Fund? Could you please attach an update on those balances (for all segments of the Fund)?
<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p><b>Sport Fish – FY2025 Projected Revenue - \$21,352.0</b>  License Sales – \$19,200.0  Permit Sales – \$72.0  Boating and Angling Fees collected by DNR/Parks - \$600.0  Interest and Investment Income – \$1,100.0  Other Revenue - \$380.0  <b>Sport Fish – FY2024 Year-End Balance - \$18,324.2</b></p> <p><b>Wildlife – FY2025 Projected Revenue - \$19,382.8</b>  License Sales - \$14,293.6  Permit Sales - \$3,218.8  Interest and Investment Income - \$930.0  Other Revenue - \$940.4  <b>Wildlife – FY2024 Year-End Balance - \$26,519.7</b></p> <p><b>Commercial Fisheries – FY2025 Projected Revenue - \$137.4</b>  Civil Fines, Penalties, Forfeitures &amp; Judgements - \$107.6  Interest and Investment Income - \$29.8  <b>Commercial Fisheries – FY2024 Year-End Balance - \$1,145.0</b></p>				

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10	Various	Recruitment and Retention	n/a	How is the agency faring with recruitment and retention for various job classes? Is State compensation for Fish and Game biologists and other specialists competitive with other employers, including the federal government and private industry? What percentage of your specialized staff is eligible for retirement or will be within the next five years?
<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>ADF&amp;G continues to face challenges in recruiting skilled staff across various roles, from fish and wildlife technicians to analyst programmers to biometricians. Retention is more stable with expected vacancies and retirements. As inflationary pressures add to Alaska’s already high cost of living, housing shortages, particularly in rural Alaska, create barriers to filling permanent full-time and seasonal part-time positions, with significant difficulty in hiring seasonal employees due to housing. These challenges not only make it hard to fill critical positions but force existing staff to fill multiple roles and assume new and challenging responsibilities. Continued demands on staff could lead to increased burnout and exacerbate retention issues.</p>				
11	Various	Equipment Maintenance Funding	n/a	Does the agency currently have adequate funding to perform necessary equipment fleet maintenance on schedule? This question applies to vessels, aircraft, and any other specialized vehicles that are not covered in the State Equipment Fleet. What is the area of greatest need, and what additional maintenance would be performed if the agency had increased funding?

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11		<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>The Division of Commercial Fisheries has six large research vessels and five aircraft to provide consistent research and assessment support. The R/V Kestrel was scheduled to receive dry dock services for routine maintenance during the current off-season. The Southeast region pulled from various funding sources to be able to cover \$600,000 for the dry dock. The lowest bid through the competitive bid process was over \$900,000. The division was not able to secure additional funding, and the dry dock was postponed. The maintenances schedule used to be every other year but that has been pushed to every three years. Extending this schedule could result in potential operational and safety issues as well as more expensive repairs.</p> <p>In addition, smaller pieces of equipment are rapidly aging, including trucks, ATVs, skiffs, outboards, etc. Additional funding would be prioritized on a regional level but would include maintenance of vessels and aircraft, followed by the replacement of smaller equipment needs. The Division of Commercial Fisheries requested an increment of \$450.0 UGF that will be used to address vessel and aircraft maintenance, repair and upgrades.</p> <p>Unlike the Division of Commercial Fisheries, the Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) is able to utilize Fish and Game Fund and Pittman Robertson funding to partially address maintenance needs. Additional funding would be utilized to fully fund maintenance costs and address 5-year, 10-year, and 15-year outlooks for maintenance of aircraft. DWC has requested an increment of \$217.0 to meet maintenance needs.</p>		

# Attachment 1

## NORTHERN ENDOWMENT FUND FY2025 ADF&G PROJECTS

### Taku River Salmon Stock Assessment

This project provides budgetary support for the Taku River adult Chinook, sockeye, and coho stock assessment and juvenile Chinook and coho coded-wire-tagging studies. Combined, these projects allow estimates of smolt abundance, marine survival, and exploitation rate along with annual preseason run forecasts and inseason estimates of inriver run and escapement in support of abundance-based management. Taku River Chinook, sockeye, and coho salmon populations are some of the largest in Southeast Alaska. The Taku River stock assessment program is a cooperative effort between ADF&G, Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canada), and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. The FY2025 budget is very cost-effective. Funding covers several stock assessment components, most of which are longstanding projects that have been vetted and are well-supported, as follows:

- Chinook and coho smolt tagging. This component began in 1991, and costs cover juvenile capture and tagging operations in the spring.
- Adult Chinook mark–recapture event 1 tagging. Work began in 1995, and costs cover adult Chinook capture and tagging operations using drift gillnets and fish wheels as part of a mark–recapture study to estimate escapement.
- Adult coho MR event 1 tagging. Work began in 1987 and cost cover adult coho capture and tagging using fish wheels as part of a MR study to estimate escapement.
- Adult Chinook MR event 2 recovery. Work began in the mid-1970s, and costs cover age, sex, length, and tag sampling on the spawning grounds.
- Chinook aerial surveys. Work began in the late-1960s, have been standardized since 1973, and costs cover surveying five index spawning grounds.
- This project directly supports Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 obligations of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. Stock assessment on the Taku is funded through the Northern Endowment Fund and the Pacific Salmon Treaty Base increment.

### Alsek River Chinook and Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment – \$598,256

This project supports Chinook and sockeye stock assessment on the Alsek River. Mark–recapture studies to assess Alsek River inriver abundance and spawning escapement occurred from 1998 to 2004 for Chinook salmon and in 1983 and from 2000 to 2004 for sockeye salmon. There is a longstanding weir at the Klukshu River, a headwater tributary in the Yukon Territory, that has been used historically as a surrogate index of Chinook and sockeye salmon production in the Alsek drainage. However, the recent Pacific Salmon Commission annex directed the U.S. and Canada to better refine abundance-based management and to reimplement direct measures of drainage-wide inriver abundance through mark–recapture methodologies. Thus, beginning with the 2022 field season, and using funds provided by the Northern Endowment Fund, mark–recapture coupled with radiotelemetry studies were initiated. Tagging objectives were exceeded



from 2022 to 2024, and defensible abundance estimates for Chinook and sockeye were achieved. The FY2025 budget is very cost-effective. Funding covers several components as follows:

- Chinook and sockeye mark–recapture event 1 tagging. This includes costs to capture and tag salmon in the lower river. Scales, length, and tissue samples are also gathered as part of this effort.
- Chinook and sockeye radio telemetry. This includes costs of radio tags for use in 2025 and costs of aircraft charters to track radio tags below the U.S. border to estimate the distribution, stock composition and run timing of Chinook and sockeye salmon.
- This project directly supports Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 obligations of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. Stock assessment on the Alsek is covered entirely by the Northern Endowment Fund.

### **Stikine River Salmon Stock Assessment and Telemetry**

This project provides budgetary support for the Stikine River Chinook and coho salmon adult mark–recapture (MR) study, Chinook and coho juvenile coded-wire-tagging, and adult sockeye salmon studies. Combined, these projects allow estimates of smolt abundance, marine survival, and exploitation rate along with annual preseason run forecasts and inseason estimates of inriver run and escapement in support of abundance-based management. Stikine River Chinook, sockeye, and coho salmon populations are some of the largest in Southeast Alaska. The FY2025 budget is very cost-effective. Funding covers several stock assessment components, most of which are longstanding projects that have been vetted and are well-supported, as follows:

- Chinook and coho smolt tagging. This component began in 2000, and costs fund juvenile capture and tagging operations in the spring.
- Adult Chinook MR event 1 tagging. This is a longstanding effort that began in 1996, and costs cover the adult Chinook capture and tagging operations using drift gillnets operated just below the border at Kakwan Point as part of a MR study to estimate escapement.
- Adult sockeye assessment. Costs will fund year 3 of an effort to capture sockeye salmon using drift gillnets operated just below the border at Kakwan Point to allow scale and tissue sampling to determine stock compositions of immigrating sockeye for use in sockeye run reconstruction post season.
- Adult coho MR event 1 tagging. Includes costs to fund year 2 of an effort to capture and tag coho using drift gillnets operated just below the border at Kakwan Point as part of a MR study to estimate escapement.
- Chinook and coho telemetry. Includes the costs of radio tags and for flights to monitor tags. This would be year 2 of the radiotelemetry work and an ongoing effort to determine dropout rates on Chinook and coho for use in the adult mark–recapture studies.
- This project directly supports Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 obligations of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. Stock assessment on the Stikine is covered entirely by the Northern Endowment Fund.

## **Boundary Area Coho Salmon Escapement Monitoring**

This project provides budgetary support to maintain an escapement assessment program for coho salmon in the northern boundary area. The Hugh Smith Lake coho population has been the only long-term, continuously operated wild coho indicator stock project in the northern boundary area, with catch, escapement, smolt production, marine survival, and age composition estimates dating back to 1982. This would continue to fund operation of a weir to enumerate adult coho returning to Hugh Smith Lake and support helicopter surveys that broaden escapement assessment to 14 additional streams that have been surveyed annually since 1987.

The FY2025 budget is very cost-effective. Funding covers annual weir operations and aerial surveys and forms the core of ADF&G coho salmon research in southern Southeast Alaska. This project directly supports Chapter 2 of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, and the work is entirely funded by the Northern Endowment Fund.

## **Alaska Coho Salmon Genetic Baseline: Phase IV Sampling**

This project provides budgetary support for a multi-year effort to expand the current coho genetic baseline across Southeast Alaska. The current genetic baseline is substantial having many thousands of coho salmon from a gauntlet of populations across the region. However, a few notable gaps remained in the baseline which were addressed by this effort.

The FY2025 budget is very cost-effective. Funding covers the last year of field work to sample and gather tissues. This project supports Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 obligations of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, and the work is covered entirely by the Northern Endowment Fund.

## **Second-Generation Consequences of Sockeye Salmon Enhancement in Auke Creek, Alaska, Year 4 (UAF also received \$29,638)**

This project provides budgetary support to Gene Conservation Laboratory costs associated with genotyping Auke Creek sockeye salmon tissue samples and calculating relative reproductive success. The overarching goal of this project is to measure the effects of sockeye salmon enhancement on reproductive success in the second generation, when hatchery-origin individuals return to spawn naturally with wild-born individuals.

The FY2025 budget is very cost-effective. Funding covers the final stages of a multi-year effort that will provide critical information on the effects of hatchery-origin fish spawning in the wild. The results of this project have been sought for decades to help drive policy regarding sockeye enhancement on wild stocks in Southeast Alaska and in Canada. This project supports the Pacific Salmon Treaty in principle and the work is covered entirely by the Northern Endowment Fund.

## **RED KING CRAB SURVEYS SUPPORTED BY THE NORTH PACIFIC RESEARCH BOARD**

### **The Bristol Bay Red King Crab Movement**

This project is being led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Kodiak. The project is assessing seasonal movement of mature female red king crabs using archival pop-up satellite tags. During the NOAA eastern Bering Sea (EBS) summer trawl survey, 127 tags were deployed, and these tags are scheduled to pop to the surface and transmit location data in the winter/spring 2025. Approximately, \$25,000 was included in FY2025 to cover one month salary and sea-pay for an ADF&G Fisheries Biologist 2 to participate in the 2024 NOAA EBS survey (to assist with tag deployment) and to assist with tag data post-processing.

### **The Bristol Bay Red King Crab Larval Settlement Potential**

This project is being led by ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Kodiak, that is assessing Bristol Bay red king crab larval supply (artificial collectors) and post-larval settlement habitat (Camera Sled) throughout Bristol Bay to better understand causes of the ongoing low recruitment levels. In FY2025, \$74,000 was included to cover salary for Fisheries Biologist 2 and 3 to conduct this research including at-sea charters in the summer of 2024, image analysis, sample processing etc. Two charters occurred in 2024. The first in April/May which deployed larval collectors and recorded high resolution images of habitat throughout Bristol Bay using the ADF&G "Camera Sled". The other charter took place in August of 2024 to retrieve the larval collectors. Habitat image analysis is currently underway, and plans are in place to repeat this research in 2025.

## **KELP GENETICS PROJECT SUPPORTED BY SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE**

Progress has been made by the ADF&G Gene Conservation Laboratory (GCL) on two of the project components. Opportunistic kelp tissue sample collection through the ADF&G permitting process and collaboration with local kelp farmers is in progress and has contributed greatly to the state's tissue archives for multiple kelp species. DNA extraction and purification methods were optimized to utilize non-toxic semi-high throughput protocols relative to published methods and yield substantial improvements in DNA quantity and quality relative to initial testing. Optimized methods were used to extract DNA from samples of archived tissue from approximately 200 individuals from each of three kelp species. A subset of the best of these DNA extracts from each species will be used in January 2025 to generate whole genome sequencing data for analysis of broad-scale neutral and adaptive wild population genomic structure and development of species-specific high-throughput genetic marker panels for evaluation finer-scale structure and on-farm

genetic diversity. Finally, needs evaluation and scoping of high-performance computing cluster (HPC) options for the genomic analytical work, finalization of HPC design with a chosen state-approved vendor, hardware procurement, and initial hardware and network installation has been completed.