

12th March 2011



Alaska Salmon Fisheries Certification

Certification Recommendation

A positive Certification determination has been awarded for the US *Alaska Commercial Salmon Fisheries* against the United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) based Responsible Fisheries Management criteria, by a Global Trust Certification Committee on March 11, 2011, after a twelve month independent assessment of the salmon fisheries.

The Certification covers the Alaska commercial salmon fisheries, including five species of Pacific Salmon:

- i. King (or Chinook) (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)
- ii. Sockeye (or Red) (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)
- iii. Coho (or Silver) (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)
- iv. Pink (or Humpback) (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*)
- v. Keta (or Chum) (*Oncorhynchus keta*)

A Global Trust Certification Committee, composed of fishery, certification and accreditation experts, was tasked with a qualitative review of the formal processes, assessment reports and recommendations provided by the fishery Assessment Team and Peer Reviewers appointed to assess this fishery.

The Certification Committee unanimously agreed with the Assessment Team's findings that the applicant Alaska salmon fisheries are responsibly managed, by effective management institutions using robust fishery management plans based on good science.

The resulting certification communication for the Alaska commercial salmon fisheries is 'Certified Responsible Fisheries Management'.

This Certification delivers high confidence that reliable management systems are in place to properly assess and respond to any current and evolving issues and allow the fishery to continue on the path of sustainable and responsible management. These management systems are certified as being in line with those recommended by the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995).

This Certification demonstrates responsible management for the sustainable use of the fisheries and is a realistic and tangible communication for this standard and process. The Certification lasts for five years and it involves annual surveillance assessments of the fisheries. This Certification means that the Alaska Commercial Salmon Fisheries have met the criteria for certification of responsibly managed fisheries at the point in time of the assessment. This certification does not certify that the fisheries will remain responsibly managed in the future. Thus the reason there are annual surveillance assessments.

The Alaska salmon fisheries scored highly against all FAO-based criteria. There were zero non-conforming areas recorded by the Assessment Team and these findings were supported by separate, peer review evaluations. A vast amount of information has been collated and recorded regarding the applicant fisheries, all of which were considered in the assessment. The assessment findings have been summarized in a 250 page Full Assessment and Certification Report.

The Certified salmon fisheries employ a variety of gear types in the four administrative regions of Alaska which are principally managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG). Almost all of Alaska's salmon fisheries take place within state internal waters (0-3 nm, and other enclosed waters).

The assessment process has layers of governance and transparency. The assessment was conducted by Global Trust Certification according to its (International Standards Organizations) ISO 65 procedures for FAO-based Responsible Fisheries Management Certification. ISO 65 is the international accreditation criteria for bodies offering product and process certification. The ISO 65 assessment, certification and decision process is governed by the accreditation bodies of the International Accreditation Forum.

The established FAO Criteria for the fishery assessment were based on key standard documents. These documents included the FAO-based Responsible Fisheries Management Conformance Criteria (Version 1, July 2010), as derived from FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995), and the minimum criteria set out for marine fisheries in the FAO Guidelines for the Eco-Labeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (2005/2009).

Certification for the Salmon Fishery is for a 5 year period after which the fishery will re-enter full assessment. In the intervening years, the fisheries will be subject to annual surveillance assessment to confirm that the fishery continues to meet the requirements for certification.

The Full Assessment and Certification report (250 pages) will be available for download Global Trust's website beginning March 28, 2011. Go to: www.GTCERT.com and <http://sustainability.alaskaseafood.org/salmon-certification>

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Summary of the Process

The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI), on behalf of Alaska Salmon fisheries, submitted an Application to Global Trust Certification for a formal assessment of the Alaska commercial salmon fisheries to the requirements of the FAO-Based Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification Program. The Application was made in April 2010 (Table 1).

After an initial Validation Assessment (Table 2) was completed by Global Trust in August 2010, an expert Assessment Team was formed to undertake the full assessment. The six person team was composed of independent assessors (Table 3) with expert competency in Pacific salmon fisheries, the Alaska management system and FAO assessment criteria.

The Assessment Team's report was Peer reviewed by two additional independent experts (Table 4) before being submitted to a formal five person, independent Global Trust Certification Committee (Table 5) for an independent certification decision.

Key factors and issues evaluated, documented and judged by the Assessment Team included:

A. The Fisheries Management System

Alaska's salmon fisheries are managed under a clear structure of laws, regulations, treaties, and other legal mandates and instruments. This management process is well-established and transparent. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is the primary domestic legislation governing the management of American fisheries. For the State of Alaska, Article VIII, Section 4 (Sustained Yield) of Alaska's Constitution prescribes that replenishable resource such as fish belonging to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle. Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) Commercial Fisheries Division is responsible for conservation of Alaska's salmon stocks and for management of the commercial fisheries. ADFG's main priority is achieving escapement, which ensures that enough salmon escape the fisheries, and spawn in their natal rivers. Management plans are established by the Alaska Board of Fisheries for each Region, incorporated into regulation in Title 5 Alaska Administrative Code, and available for timely implementation by the responsible ADFG area biologists.

B. Science and Stock Assessment Activities

ADFG operates an efficient data collection and analysis system that is effective in managing Alaska's salmon resources. ADFG is responsible for acquiring fishery dependant and independent information necessary to effectively manage commercial, sport, subsistence, and personal use fisheries. Each year, ADFG staff located throughout the state define the data needs for management of each salmon fishery, develop statistically valid study designs, and collect, analyze, and report the data necessary for effective fisheries management plans. Each step of this process is guided by state policies, statutes, and/or nationally recognized scientific standards. ADFG maintains a large staff of research and management biologists (totaling over 350), located throughout the state, who are responsible for supervising the field data collection, laboratory work, data analysis, and reporting. The State has also numerous cooperative technical, stock assessment, and management interactions with other States and management organizations that deal with trans-boundary salmon stocks that are harvested in Alaska.

C. The Precautionary Approach

There was strong evidence of a precautionary approach used by management and specifically, for defining and identifying the reference points for salmon fisheries. For example, there is provision of detailed regulations and availability of stock status management reports. The primary reference points used for salmon management are escapement goals. All of Alaska's salmon fisheries have been divided into individual runs, or aggregates of runs, for management purposes. For each individual run, or stock aggregates, an escapement goal has been established. In-season management tools, principally the Emergency Order, gives local ADFG staff the authority to effectively close fisheries in real time to allow a high likelihood that escapement goals are met for the protection of spawning escapement. State Regulation, the Policy for the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries, codifies the precautionary approach for regulation of salmon fisheries and for habitat conservation. The statewide Sustainable Salmon Policy requires the ADFG to routinely provide regional stock status reports, escapement goal reviews, and action plans that include management directives to promote recovery of any stocks of concern.

D. Management Measures

The Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) limits the number of participating fishers to provide economic stability in Alaska fisheries. Permits and vessel licenses for each gear type are issued to qualified individuals and there is a transparent process for appealing decisions made by CFEC.

Biologically established Escapement Goals (BEGs) form the principal control rule for setting harvest limits. BEGs are usually established using stock-recruit information which generally requires multiple years of run reconstructions to establish. A Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEGs) is the level of past escapement that has resulted in sustainable yield over a 5-10 year period. SEGs are used when data are insufficient to establish a BEG, usually due to lack of stock specific harvest data. Two other, less common escapement goals are also defined in the Sustainable Salmon policy. An Optimum Escapement Goal (OEG) is a specific management objective for salmon escapement that considers biological and allocative factors and may differ from BEGs or SEGs. A Sustainable Escapement Threshold (SET) is a threshold level of escapement, below which the ability of the stock to sustain itself is jeopardized. Every three years each Alaskan administrative region updates its escapement information and submits a salmon stock status report to the Board of Fisheries (BoF).

The BoF considers these status reports and makes allocative decisions based on proposals and recommendations from all interests; including from fishing, other stakeholders, the State and the BoF itself. The process separates the conservation role of ADFG from the allocation role of BoF.

Time and area restrictions limit when and where specific fisheries occur, and restrictions are also imposed by regulation on all types of fishing gear. As discussed, Emergency Orders are used to close or limit access to fisheries based on information on run strength and escapement goals.

E. Implementation, Monitoring and Control

The salmon management program conducted by ADFG is a responsive and adaptive program. It monitors salmon abundance during the fishing season and makes continual adjustments in fishing time and area based on observed escapements, commercial fishery performance, test fishing, biological data on age, sex and size, historical run timing curves and other data. Alaska Statutes Title 16 (AS16) and Alaska Administrative Code Title 5 (AAC5) enable the government to fine, imprison, and confiscate equipment for violations and restrict an individual's right to fish if convicted of a violation. Withdrawal or suspension of authorizations to officers of a fishing vessel is also among the enforcement options. The Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) Division is charged with protecting the state's natural resources. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) also enforces boating safety laws and fishing vessels. For fisheries under federal management, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement (OLE) enforces federal laws that protect and conserve Alaska's living marine resources and their habitat. Cooperation and coordination among ADFG, AWT, USCG, and OLE is frequent and routine. As noted, the Alaska Limited Entry system (CFEC) only allows legally permitted vessels to operate in salmon fisheries.

F. Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem

Alaska's Sustainable Salmon Policy includes provisions addressing the potential effects of ecological changes/perturbations on sustainably allowable salmon harvest and maintenance of normal ecosystem functioning. Potential ecological effects on salmon stocks are incorporated in the establishment of escapement goals for each stock. Fishing gear employed for harvest of Alaska salmon is not considered to have habitat disturbance impact on the fisheries and ecosystems. Ocean ranching and salmon fishery enhancement is practiced widely for the purpose of ensuring common property fisheries. These activities, i.e., salmon hatcheries and the harvest of the salmon they produce, are strictly regulated by the state through the ADFG so as to avoid or minimize effects on genetic diversity of wild salmon and ecosystem integrity caused by stray hatchery returns and density dependent factors. Whilst there is evidence of hatchery straying, a considerable amount of research by ADFG, the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission, and NOAA focuses on the quantification, ecological interaction of hatchery released and wild salmon in Alaska, marine ecology of juvenile salmon and density dependent growth factors in the high seas. NOAA's time-series and process-oriented studies have revealed no compelling evidence of ecological interaction of hatchery and wild salmon in the coastal marine habitat.

Further Information.

Full Assessment outcome summaries can be found in the Full Assessment and Certification Report which will be posted on the Global Trust website, www.gtcert.com and Alaska seafood website, <http://sustainability.alaskaseafood.org/salmon-certification> after March 28, 2011

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Table 1: Fishery Application Summary

Applicant Contact Information			
Organization/ Company Name:	Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute on behalf of Alaska Salmon Fisheries	Date:	April 2010
Correspondence Address:	International Marketing Office and Administration Suite 200		
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Key Management Contact Information			
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Position:	Seafood Technical Program Director		
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Nominated Deputy:	As Above		
Deputy Phone:	As Above	Deputy E-mail Address:	rrice@alaskaseafood.org

Table 2: Schedule of Key Assessment Activities

Assessment Activities	Date (s)
Application Date	April 2010
Initial Site Visit Consultation Meetings	June –July 2 nd 2010
Initial Validation Assessment Report	August 2010
Appointment of Full Assessment Team	September- October 2010
On-site Witnessed Assessment and Consultation Meetings	Nov 15 th -19 th and Dec 2 nd -8 th 2010
Draft Assessment Report	February 10 th 2011
External Peer Review	February 12 th 2011
Final Assessment Report	March 1 st 2011
Certification Review/Decision	March 2011

Table 3: Global Trust Assessment Team Members

Assessor	Role	Assessor	Role
Dave Garforth, Global Trust Certification Ltd. Rivercentre, Riverlane Dundalk, Co. Louth Ireland	Assessment Leader	Deirdre Hoare, Global Trust Certification Ltd. Rivercentre, Riverlane Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland	Assessor
William Smoker, 413 SW Butterfield Pl Corvallis, OR 987333 USA	Assessor	Steven McGee , 163 Birdsong Lane Port Angeles, WA 98362 USA	Assessor
Rolland Holmes, 2913 Blueberry Hills Rd. Juneau, AK 99801 USA	Assessor	Stephen Grabacki , Graystar P.O.Box 100506 Anchorage, Alaska USA	Assessor

<http://sustainability.alaskaseafood.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Confirmation-of-Assessment-Team-Members-Salmon-10-5-10.pdf>

Table 4: Peer Reviewers

Herman Savikko	Timothy L Joyce
<p>Herman Savikko has a degree in Biological Sciences and began his career in fisheries in 1975, working seasonally for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in remote locations, including four Bristol Bay river systems and the Karluk River on Kodiak Island and several sockeye/Chinook salmon enumeration and escapement projects. Later, at the National Marine Fisheries Service at their Auke Bay Biological Laboratory, Mr. Savikko researched the early marine survival of pink and chum salmon throughout Northern Southeast Alaska and then gained hatchery experience at a private, non-profit hatchery on Gastineau Channel. Throughout a 30 year career at Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Mr. Savikko worked in the Divisions of Sport Fish, Fisheries Rehabilitation, Enhancement and Development, and Commercial Fisheries. His responsibilities covered freshwater and marine species management, research, and policy development. Mr. Savikko compiled and reported state-wide salmon harvest data by management area, as well as maintaining the Commercial Operators Annual Report. As a member of the Commissioner’s team, he helped develop, draft and implement salmon by-catch limits for the Bering Sea pollock fleet, as well as develop the foundation for bycatch measures in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries.</p>	<p>Timothy Joyce holds a degree in Fishery Science from Oregon State University Corvallis and has over 30 years experience in Alaska salmon management. He has worked in hatchery management for Kitoi Bay, in common property resource harvest management and in regional fishery planning processes for Kodiak Island. Mr. Joyce worked as an Area Manager and Resource Management Biologist in Cordova with overall responsibility for regulation and harvest management of commercial salmon purse seine fisheries. In the mid nineties, working as an Area Resource Biologist, Mr. Joyce was involved in the transition from coded wire tags as a marking tool to an otolith bone mark as a method for distinguishing hatchery produced salmon. Also of note, he managed the development of a statistically defensible sampling protocol to determine the catch contribution of each individual hatchery and of wild salmon stocks in the commercial fishery in Prince William Sound. Since 2001, Mr. Joyce has worked as Program Manager for the USDA Forest Service in Prince William Sound. Mr. Joyce remains knowledgeable on the Alaska salmon management system, providing advice</p>

Table 5: Global Trust Certification Committee

<p>Peter Marshall, Chairperson Certification and Accreditation Expert Global Trust Certification Ltd.</p> <p>Key Contact: petermarshall@gtcert.com</p>	<p>Bill Paterson Legal / Technical / Accreditation Expert Global Trust Certification Ltd.</p>
<p>Ciaran Kelly Fishery Management Expert Marine Institute. Ireland</p>	<p>Clare Murray Fishery Scientist Global Trust Certification Ltd.</p>
<p>Vito Romito Fishery Scientist / Information Management Global Trust Certification Ltd.</p>	