

Estimation of coho salmon escapement in the Ugashik lakes, Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska, 2001-2003

Abstract: Local subsistence users have expressed concern over the lack of inseason escapement information for coho salmon *Oncorhynchus kisutch* entering the Ugashik lakes. Escapement monitoring of coho salmon in the Ugashik Commercial Fishing District is from infrequent aerial surveys at the end of the season. The lack of inseason escapement information has led to concerns of possible over harvest by the sport-fish user group. In 2000, the King Salmon Fish and Wildlife Field Office initiated a three-year counting tower project to estimate coho salmon escapement to address these concerns. Counting operations were conducted from mid-July to late-September each year using the standard Alaska Department of Fish and Game counting tower protocols. Escapement was estimated at 3,606 in 2001, 17,730 in 2002, and 28,212 in 2003. A total of 297 coho salmon were sampled for age, sex, and length data. Three age classes were identified; age class 2.1 was the most abundant each year, followed by age 1.1, and age 3.1. Mid-eye to fork lengths (mm) ranged from 465 to 687 in 2001, 452 to 663 in 2002, and 471 to 697 in 2003. Mean length at age varied between years and was largest for all age classes in 2003.

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