

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Case File No.: AA-083230 (2912)
AK-040-02-EA-035

Applicant: Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, Inc., (SSRAA)

Type of Action: R&PP for Salmon Hatchery

Location: Copper River Meridian, Alaska
T. 75 S., R. 91 E., Sec. 35,
Lot 106, U.S. Survey No. 3385, Alaska.

Prepared By: Dorothy Bonds
Realty Specialist

Preparing Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507-2599

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Southern Southeastern Regional Aquaculture Association, Inc., (SSRAA) applied for a Recreation and Public Purpose (R&PP) lease on July 5, 2001, to renew their expired lease for an existing non-profit salmon hatchery. This hatchery has operated under an R&PP lease since 1978, and is still being used for the purpose for which SSRAA originally applied. These lands have been examined and found suitable for fish hatchery purposes, described as Lot 106, of U.S. Survey No. 3385.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The R&PP lease is necessary for SSRAA to continue the operation of the salmon hatchery and related facilities. The fish hatchery serves as a production and central incubation facility. The hatchery is used for propagation of chum, coho, and chinook salmon. A portion of the coho and chinook salmon smolts are released from the hatchery directly in Herring Bay. Salmon produced by the hatchery are available for harvest by commercial, sport, subsistence users, and used to brood salmon eggs for future releases. The hatchery produces annually 1.8 million cohos, 1.0 million chinooks, and 26 million chums.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

No land use plan exists for this area. However, the environmental analysis assesses the impacts of the Proposed Action and provides a basis for a decision on the proposal [43 CFR 1610.8 (b)(1)].

C. Relationship To Statutes, Regulations, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The lands are under the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) jurisdiction. The Proposed Action occurs on Federal Public Lands as defined in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Section 102(3). These lands fall under the authority of the Federal Subsistence Board.

Lot 106 is presently withdrawn for Power Projects 11841 and 11597. SSRAA has received concurrence for this Proposed Action from the Ketchikan Public Utilities on behalf of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for Water and Land Use agreement. A copy of this agreement was provided by SSRAA

SSRAA provided a copy of the Water Right Permit from the State of Alaska for their use of the Whitman Lake as their water source for the facility.

The lands are classified for sale or lease under the R&PP Act pursuant to 43 CFR 2912.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is for SSRAA to continue the operation and maintenance of the existing non-profit salmon hatchery and related facilities. The hatchery is located near Herring Bay about eight miles south of Ketchikan within Lot 106, of U.S. Survey No. 3385, in Section 35, T. 75 S., R. 91 E., Copper River Meridian, Alaska (see the attached map). The facility contains approximately 3.10 acres of land.

There is a mobile home on site that houses a full-time technician who provides security and a first response to alarms from the hatchery water supply. This employee is the contact on site for emergency purposes only. Other facilities include a hatchery building, degassing tower, valve house, fiberglass tank, oxygen generator shed, chemical room, storage shed used to store commercially produced fish food pellets, chemicals commonly used in salmonid aquaculture, and a mechanical shop. A fuel storage, a metal pole building, and a small concrete pad are located on adjoining Lot 107.

B. No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative would be to deny SSRAA's application for the renewal of the R&PP lease.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements of the human environment were not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action:

- Air Quality
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Environmental Justice
- Farm Lands (prime or unique)
- Floodplains
- Invasive, Non-native Species
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Threatened or Endangered Species
- Water Quality, Surface/Ground
- Wetlands/Riparian Zones
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

1. Cultural Resources:
There are no cultural resources known in the area of the Herring Bay salmon hatchery. This hatchery has operated on these premises for the last twenty years. A search of the Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHRS) files show that a petroglyph site (KET-00007) is located at the head of Herring Bay. This indicates that this area was used during aboriginal times and archaeological remains may exist in the area. Hatchery operators should be aware that any new construction may uncover previously unknown cultural resources.

2. Subsistence - ANILCA, Section 810:
The Proposed Action occurs on Federal Public Lands as defined in ANILCA and falls under the regulatory authority of the Federal Subsistence Board. These fish represent 23 years of artificially augmented subsistence fishery as well as contributing to commercial and sport fisheries. The closure of this hatchery could impact subsistence users in the release areas. Some of the fish from which eggs and milt are stripped are made available or given to elders and subsistence users. Therefore, this action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses, decrease the abundance of subsistence resources, alter the distribution of subsistence resources, or limit subsistence users' access from currently existing conditions. The existing conditions of the hatchery operation help maintain present conditions since the hatchery began operations in 1978. No further analysis is necessary at this time.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

- A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:
 1. Critical Elements:
 - a. Wastes, Hazardous or Solid (Fish Compounds):
Two facilities are used for storing compounds, such as fish food and chemicals. There is a potential to spill chemical compounds at the site.

- B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:
Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts.

- C. Residual and Cumulative Impacts:
No residual or cumulative impacts will occur from this action.

- D. Mitigation:
The buildings that store chemicals and fish food should be kept in a safe and protective condition. Chemicals should be handled properly to avoid harmful or toxic results.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

- A. List of Preparers:
Dorothy Bonds - Realty Specialist
Donna Redding - Archaeologist
Jeff Denton - Subsistence Coordinator
Bruce Seppi - Wildlife Biologist
Debbie Blank - Botanist
Harrison Griffin - Physical Scientist