

# Sand Point students raise Silver Salmon

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Believe it or not, the only people raising silver salmon in Alaska besides the Department of Fish and Game are the high school aquaculture

students at Sand Point. The busy little fishing town in the Shumagin Islands, lies off the Alaska Peninsula, near the start of the Aleutian Chain.

This year's 15 class members are also watching over about

42,000 pink salmon eggs.

With their hatchery project, the students hope to restore depleted pink and silver salmon runs, which occur naturally on Popof Island,

According to class instructor

Tim Joyce, "We hope with our hatchery we can restore the run and in the class teach a little conservation. That's the primary objective of the course."

The hatchery is located on a short (3-4 miles long) stream

that once produced between two and three thousand pinks and silvers. Joyce said due to clubbing, snagging, and set netting "this creek has just been murdered. The run has declined

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to around 200 fish."

What made the situation worse was that females in particular were decimated by wasteful fishing practices.

The hatchery project began in 1975 with the help of a direct \$10,000 grant from the state legislature and a lot of interest from students in a town of 500 that depends heavily on commercial fishing for its survival.

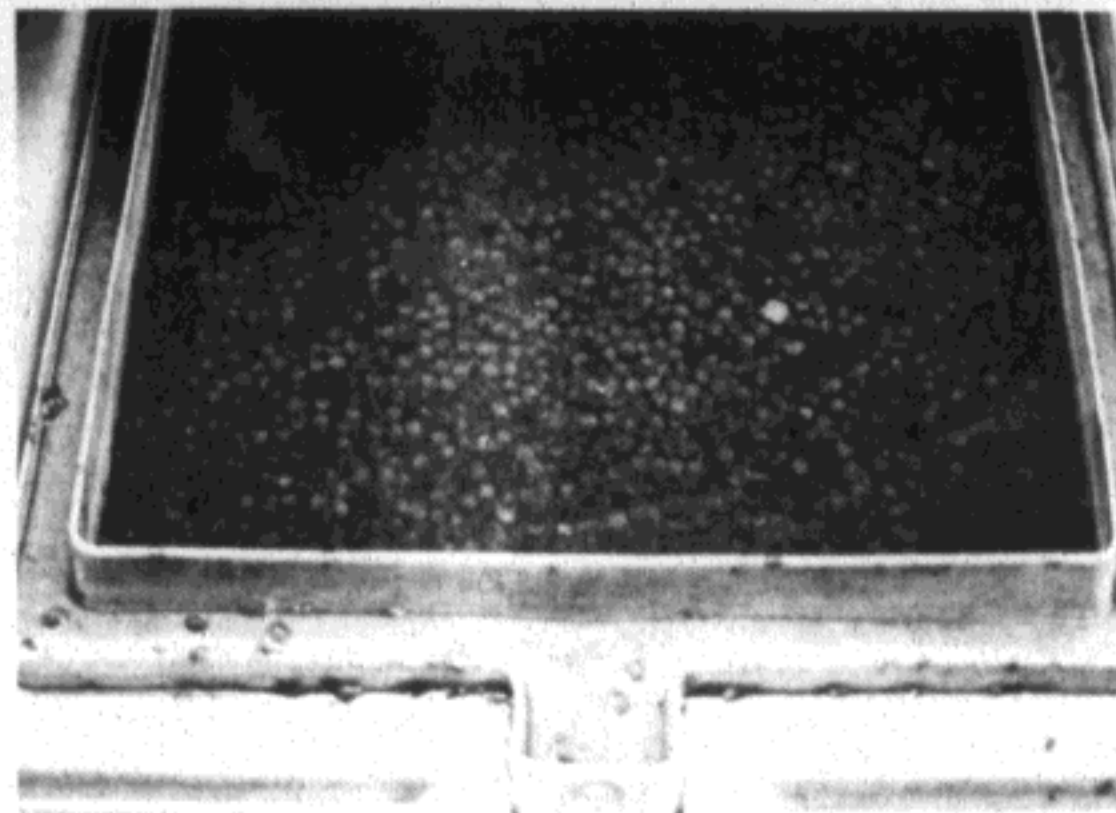
The grant paid the cost of setting up the small hatchery building and funds from the Johnson O'Malley Program finance actual operations costs.

The first silvers were netted and spawned in the fall of 1975; the first silver egg hatched May 31, 1976. These fish will be released into salt water in June or July and will not return until 1980.

Pinks were not netted until August 1976. The class spawned 24 females and 6 males, producing 42,000 eggs. Joyce



A \$10,000 grant from the Alaska State Legislature paid for construction of the modest Sand Point hatchery, located on a stream about 4 miles long.



Heath Flow Through Incubator — Silver Salmon, spawned last fall, are in the egg and sac fry stage of development.

said he expects 38,000 pinks to be released. Because of the high death rate among small ocean going fish, they expect about 400 pinks to return to the stream.

"You're only going to get 1 per cent of those fish back on an average, but it would be more fish than the creek has seen in many years," Joyce said. About 50 pinks were

counted in the stream last fall.

The Pinks, called swim-up fry at their current stage, are housed in astro-turf incubators of the type designed by National Marine Fisheries Service Scientists at Auke Bay, near Juneau, Alaska.

An interesting sidelight to the pink salmon project is that half of this years crop will be released unfed as soon as possible after inspection by a state fish pathologist for disease.

The other half, fed for several weeks with Oregon Moist pellet, will be released later when plankton conditions in nearby

waters are optimum. The purpose of the double release is to determine the relative size and condition of the two groups when they return. For identification, the pinks are being marked by the removal of their right ventral fin, which does not impair their ability to swim.

A second batch of silver eggs spawned last fall, are currently at the sac fry stage of development in the hatchery's Heath flow through incubator. Joyce expects that a 10 per cent mortality rate will leave the hatchery with about 63,000 silvers to be released in the spring of 1978.

Although the hatchery is a modest operation and will only support a sport salmon fishery, it is a facility which may contribute research findings that will lead to a better commercial fishery in the Aleutian region.

"I have great expectations. We can do pretty high level stuff. Maybe we can learn some things that could contribute to a commercial fishery," Joyce commented. As an example, he says students might discover a pattern of artificial and local natural conditions that would produce larger stronger fish.

These findings might be well put to use by two commercial sized private non-profit hatchery projects being considered for the Aleutians.



Pinks, spawned last fall, in their swim-up or button-up state, will soon be released in salt water. For later identification, they are anesthetized and have their right ventral fin clipped.

Joyce, who earned his B.S. in Fisheries Science from Oregon State University, spent two years in the Peace Corps. Stationed

in West Africa, he worked on two warm water fishery projects before accepting his position in Sand Point.