



Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AFDF LAUNCHES COMPREHENSIVE PINK SALMON EFFORT:
PROJECT UNITES PROCESSORS, TECHNOLOGISTS, HATCHERIES, BIG BUYERS

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA -- Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) this week launched a project to help Alaska's pink salmon break out of the can and into more value-added products.

Boosted by a \$115,000 grant from Alaska Science and Technology Foundation, AFDF's project will be a cooperative effort among fishermen, processors, hatcheries, technology experts, and a few large food companies that use seafood in finished food products.

"The most important thing we can do for Alaska's pink salmon is to get it out of the can and into value-added products," said AFDF executive director Chris Mitchell. "We've spent the past five months talking to the companies that make salmon Kiev, soups, pates and health food items -- the kind of products we'd like to see pink salmon used in. They've told us, 'Don't worry about product development. Just get your pink salmon to us in a quality and form we can use, and let us develop the products.' That's what we'll do in this project."

AFDF will work with two salmon processors this summer in Prince William Sound -- North Pacific Processors and Golden Age Fisheries -- who will put up several different kinds of skinless, boneless pink salmon blocks, using pinks harvested from natural

boneless pink salmon blocks, using pinks harvested from natural runs as well as from hatchery returns from Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association's hatcheries. Food technologists at the Fishery Industrial Technology Center in Kodiak will run quality control and shelf-life tests, and will experiment with quality-enhancing ingredients. Finally, samples will be sent to secondary processing companies for evaluation.

"Secondary users of fish blocks have very specific needs as far as quality supply, and price," Mitchell said. "It's an expensive process for one producer to make and test market a multitude of different blocks to different specifications. It's too much for one company to do alone, while still competing with the next guy."

AFDF's role will be to coordinate development efforts among all sectors of the industry, calling in experts from among its membership that most private companies don't have access to. The goal of the project is to learn what factors affect pink salmon quality, how to effectively reduce oxidation of the flesh after processing, how to produce blocks to the specifications of a few of the major buyers, and what the processing costs might be.

Throughout the year-long project, AFDF will broadcast to Alaska's salmon industry the successes and obstacles participants find along the way.

"AFDF is here to draw the initial roadmap," Mitchell said. "At the end of this project, we'll be able to tell salmon producers, 'Try this,' or 'Here's how to make a pink salmon block that the big guys will buy.' After that, they're on their own."

Last year, Alaska produced 201 million lbs. of pink salmon, 75% of which went into cans. In the meantime, Alaska's share of the market is plummeting, and world salmon production is increasing every year.

"Our industry has known what needs to be done for a long time -- get the salmon out of the can," Mitchell said. "The U.S. canned salmon market is primarily older people, and that market is literally dying off. But everyone's afraid to make the first bold move, because it's too risky to bet a year's production when it all comes in within three months. With this project, the whole industry is taking the risk together."

Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation is a private, non-profit organization run by fishermen, processors and food industry representatives, and has conducted a variety of fisheries development projects in the North Pacific since 1979.