

Boy Scout Lake to Rear Salmon Fry Over the Winter

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{audio}/images/stories/mp3/120816.boy_scout_lake_net_pen.mp3{/audio}

Floating net pens in Boy Scout Lake will house salmon fry over the winter. Brianna Gibbs/KMXT photo

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Kodiak

residents driving by Boy Scout Lake may have noticed something new on the water's surface. The lake, which is located along Rezanof Drive West, about halfway between Dead Man's Curve and the airport, is about to become the temporary home for 650,000 sockeye salmon fry.

Tina

Fairbanks is the production and operations manager for Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association and said the net pens visible on Boy Scout Lake, are part of KRAA's attempt to expand hatchery production.

-- (Boyscout Sockeye 1 : 36 "This year and in recent years we have been looking for opportunities to expand production at pillar creek hatchery. And we're looking at ways to expand projects that they work with, and currently the way pillar creek hatchery is set up is to be a central incubation facility. Where the egg takes will be conducted in remote locations. They would come back to pillar creek hatchery where they would incubate, hatch and be reared for a short time, and the resulting juvenile sockeye salmon would be out planted, they would be stocked into lakes around Kodiak and Afognak island.")

Pillar

creek has done this, but additional projects added to the hatchery have made it so the footprint of the site can't accommodate on site rearing of large numbers of fish. The hunt for creative ways to expand production led KRAA to utilize

road system lakes.

-- (Boyscout Sockeye 2 : 35 :
 "The project at Margret lake, or Boy Scout Lake as it is commonly known, is one of the ways we're looking to expand pillar creek hatchery production and what we've done is we have worked with and coordinated with the natives of Kodiak to gain permission to have the net pens, which will have approximately 650,000 sockeye salmon fry placed in them this week. And we are going to have a crew on site also who will be feeding and rearing and caring for all those sockeye salmon that go into those net pens.")

Fairbanks said it is important to note that the project at Boy Scout Lake is not an attempt to stock the lake, although that has been done there in the past. Instead, she calls it a "satellite rearing site," which means the fish will eventually be removed from the lake and placed in a different location. The future location, which she said is unknown at this point, will be the place the fish will return to spawn at.

In the mean time, the KRAA crew will remain with the fish at Boy Scout.

-- (Boyscout Sockeye 3 : 27 : "And they're going to be onsite until fall, this year, until the lake ices over. And once the lake ices over, the fish will be able to go dormant over winter, we'll let the nets freeze into the water. And in the spring we are going to pull those fish out, and we are going to find a stocking location, an imprinting site, for those fish when they are ready to become smolt.")

Fairbanks said KRAA chose a road system lake so they could have easy access to feed and monitor the fish. A number of road system lakes were suggested, but few were deep enough to accommodate the net pens. She said it is important to have enough space for large net pens so fish will have sufficient space to grow, and won't be scrunched together. Tight quarters can cause stress on a fish, and as a result KRAA is careful to meet specific conditions for their net pens.

-- (Boyscout Sockeye 4 : 36 : "We monitor the size of the fish over the course of their rearing period and we look at given the number of fish in each rearing unit or net pen, we want to see how dense the population is. And while we're doing that, while we're monitoring their growth and how much we feed them on a daily basis, we track that density and as the fish become more and more dense, we'll start out with two net pens on Boy Scout Lake, and when a fish reach a certain density, then we will add two more pens. So we anticipate having a total of four net pens on the lake.")

Fairbanks said KRAA normally needs specific permits and research criteria to conduct projects like this one,

but the application process was simplified for this lake because it has been used in the past for sport fish stocking, meaning criteria was already met.

She said
fish will be brought to the lake sometime this week and remain there until
spring 2013. ###