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**Internet Accessible Website for
the NPAFC Working Group on Salmon Marking**

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Internet Accessible Website for the NPAFC Working Group on Salmon Marking

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Abstract

Otolith marking is an important tool used to determine the origin of hatchery-raised free-ranging salmon in high seas and coastal waters. The number of otolith-marked salmon released from hatcheries in NPAFC countries has increased annually since 1994. The NPAFC Working Group on Salmon Marking recommended that a web accessible otolith mark database be developed. We have developed a website that is accessible through an internal server housed at the Mark, Tag, and Age Laboratory, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Juneau, Alaska (<http://npafc.taglab.org/>). This website is now available for use by the members of the NPAFC.

Introduction

At the 1999 NPAFC Annual Meeting, the CSRS recommended that the Secretariat consider the development of an Internet-accessible otolith mark database on the NPAFC website in cooperation with the Working Group on Salmon Marking (WGSM). To this end, the United States Party offered to develop a database in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Mark, Tag, and Age Lab in Juneau, AK.

The website currently is housed on a server based in the Mark, Tag, and Age Lab, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The website recently received a domain name and is now accessible at:

<http://npafc.taglab.org/>

The Website performs a variety of functions for the Working Group. The Website contains over 30 pages of information on the different types of otolith marks (i.e.-strontium marking, dry marking, and thermal marking), although most of the information is related to thermal marking. The Website also has information about the Working Group and contains links to the official NPAFC Web Page. We recently completed the glossary of terms used in the Website.

One of the most important facets of the Website is that it connects the user to a searchable database of all otolith marks used by the NPAFC member countries. Since the last annual meeting, the database of otolith marks has been corrected and updated. Information housed in the database has been standardized as much as possible to facilitate database queries. We updated the database with current release information (through brood year 2001) provided by the member countries using data maintained by the Japanese Party.

Because of inconsistencies in the application of the RBr code notation among countries, we have used the information provided by member countries in that column and utilized the hatch code in the Website's queries. We assigned the hatch code based on information provided

in the database. We reviewed the hatch code designations and tried to simplify entries so that a mark would be included in a search. This may affect accuracy of the hatch code as a description of the mark but provides a user searching for a matching otolith mark with a better list of possibilities.

We have updated many of images of otolith marks used in Alaska. We also added the images provided by the Japanese Party, and we hope to obtain images from other member countries soon. When they are provided to us through our FTP server, we will link them to the database for inclusion in the Website. In addition to the above, we made one recent important improvement. We added a button that allows users to download data to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to facilitate searches and use of the data.

USING THE DATABASE

To use the database, open the Website from its address listed above, then choose “Mark Database” from either the left hand column or from the list along the bottom of the page. That takes you to the “Thermal Mark Database” page. On that page, you use the check boxes provided to narrow the search of the database. For instance, if you were trying to find a 4,4H Sockeye otolith thermal mark, you would first check the TM box in Mark Type, then check Sockeye in Species, then move to Hatch Code, which contains a drop down box where you select 4,4H. Three records would appear for that Hatch Code. Within this table showing the 3 related records, you can press the “Image” button to view a digital image of the marked otolith or you could press the “Info” button for more information about this mark, such as Release Site, Weight, Length, and Comments. If you want to retain the results of this search, you would either print the screen to retain that information or go to the bottom of the table and hit the “Export Results” button, which changes the screen and asks you to “Download Results.” Clicking on that phrase sends the data to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which you can sort and save for further explorations of the data.

COTNRIBUTING IMAGES TO THE DATABASE

To send images for inclusion in the database, please contact us and we will supply the address and password for the FTP server.

We have increased the security around the server housing the Working Group’s Website. If you have any problems accessing the Website or sending images via the ftp server, please contact Bev Agler at: bev_agler@fishgame.state.ak.us