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First Russian fishery certified as Sustainable

Iturup Island fishery is the first in Russia to be awarded the Marine Stewardship Council label and the first salmon fishery to be certified since Alaska.

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) announced today that it has awarded certification to a pink and chum salmon fishery on the Kuril Island of Iturup managed by the Russian Government and Gidrostroy, a joint stock company which owns and manages the fishing, processing, and transport operations. The MSC certification program recognizes and rewards sustainable fishing and promotes the best environmental choices in seafood.

“Among major Russian fishing companies, Gidrostroy is the first and, to this day, the only company that has been awarded the Marine Stewardship Council certification,” says Sergei Didenko from the Sakhalin Salmon Initiative Center. “Gidrostroy’s commitment to sustainable fisheries is a turning point for the fisheries sector and a sign that sustainability has arrived in Russia.”

“Gidrostroy joins a growing list of seafood companies who understand that the long-term supply of salmon and other seafood depends on effective management and conservation,” said Brian Caouette of the Wild Salmon Center, whose mission is to conserve wild salmon across the Pacific Rim. “As demand for sustainable seafood increases, fishing companies that implement best practices stand to benefit economically.”

Like certain salmon fisheries in Alaska, the Iturup Island fishery has committed to implement a number of management changes as part of the MSC process. Changes include taking steps to minimize the potential impact of hatcheries on wild salmon populations—hatchery salmon can place wild salmon populations at risk in several ways including mixing of hatchery and wild stocks, ecosystem and genetic impacts, and disease transfer.

“We hope that the MSC certification will help companies continue to catch salmon successfully for many years and gain new markets, without undermining the stocks and minimizing damage to ecosystems,” said Konstantin Zgurovsky, Head of the WWF’s Marine Program.

A coalition of NGOs, including the Wild Salmon Center, WWF, Sakhalin Salmon Initiative Center, and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership hope that that certification of the first fishery in Russia will draw the government's attention toward resolving some of the obstacles for effective management of salmon fisheries in Russia.

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For photographs, go to:

http://www.wildsalmoncenter.org/programs/sakhalin/MSC_Russia.php