UPDATE / NAKNEK RIVER / KING SALMON

On the Naknek, the newest salmon counter listens.

SONAR, SCHEMATIC

58°41'N 156°40'W

WHAT WAS FUNDED

A federal grant puts an automated sonar near King Salmon.

BBRSDA announced the NFWF award of $188,268 on October 29th, National Fisherman reports. The sonar is meant to count returning salmon automatically and feed an online dashboard. The Naknek is its first site. The grant runs June 1st to May 31st, 2028.



HOW IT HEARS

It listens across a wide stretch of the river.

"Sonar lets us count fish across a wide stretch of the Naknek," says Lilani Dunn of BBRSDA.

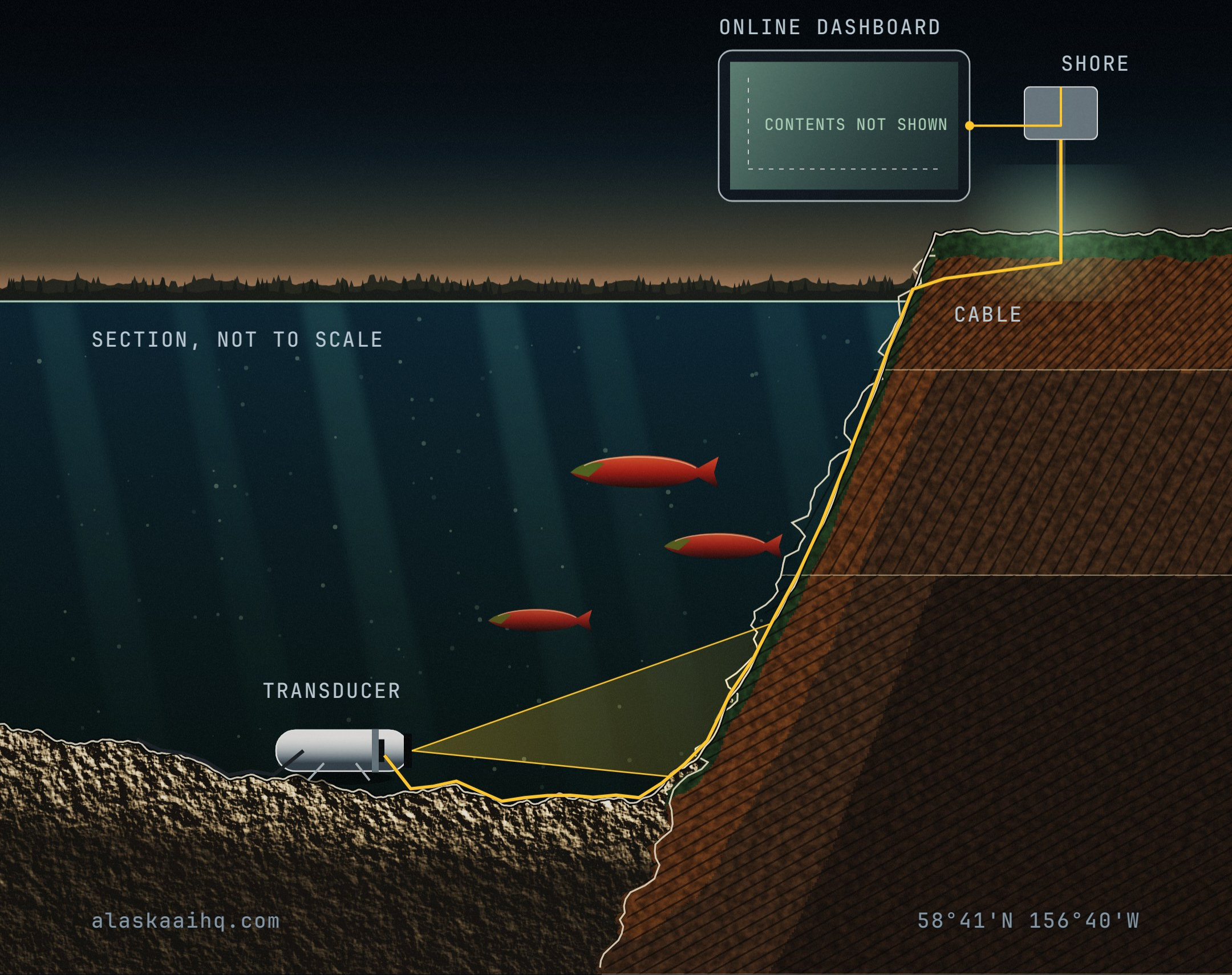
SeaSignal Technologies, working with Coastal Measures and BioSonics, was picked to build and run it, per National Fisherman.



WHERE THE COUNT GOES

From the riverbed to a screen, during the season.

Across the bay, most counts are still made by hand.

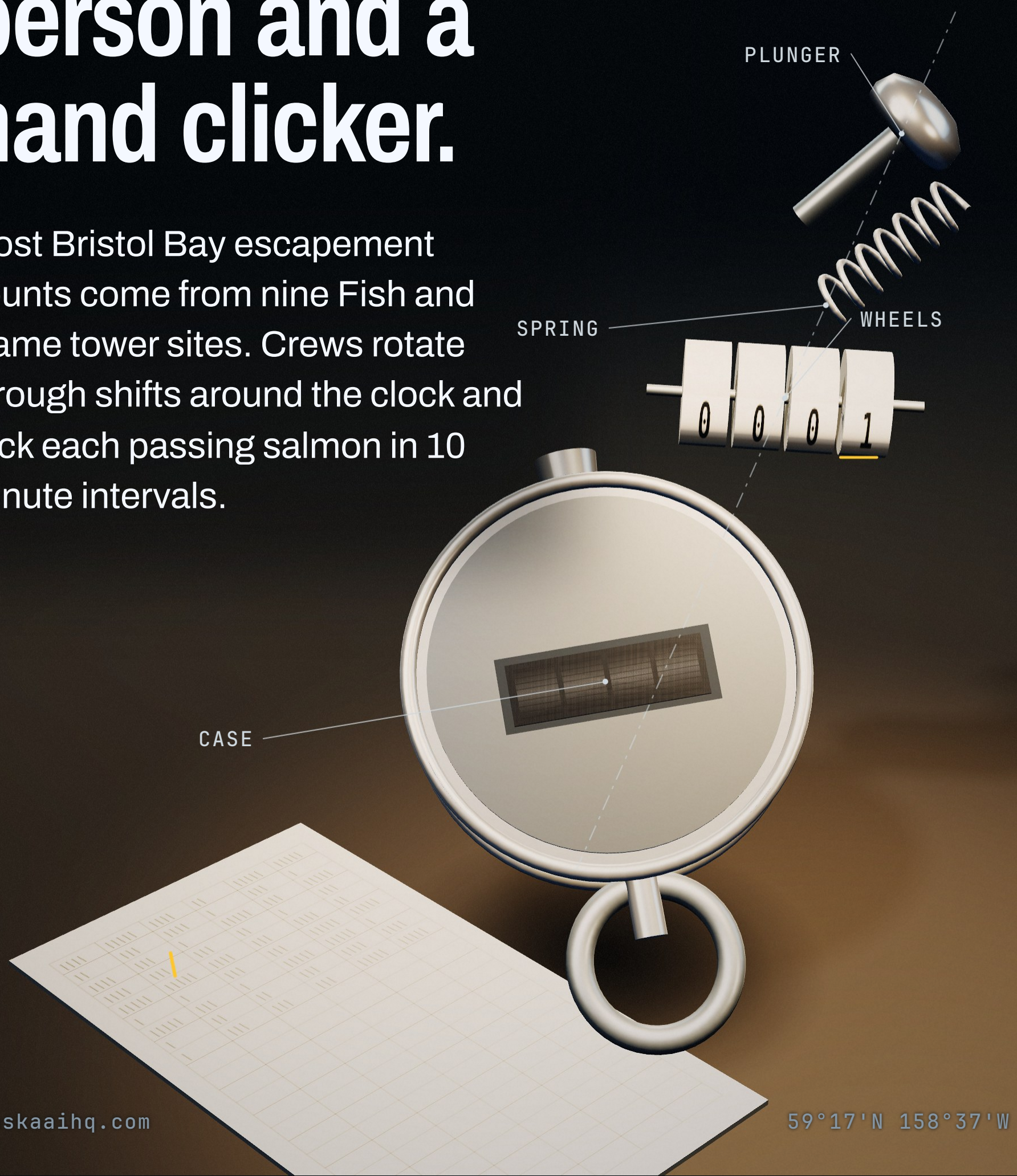


58°41'N 156°40'W

THE COUNT IT JOINS

Since 1955, a person and a hand clicker.

Most Bristol Bay escapement counts come from nine Fish and Game tower sites. Crews rotate through shifts around the clock and click each passing salmon in 10 minute intervals.



45.7 million sockeye came back to Bristol Bay this year. 15.6 million made it upriver to spawn.



THREE COUNTERS, AS EACH SOURCE DESCRIBES THEM

One fishery, three ways to count.

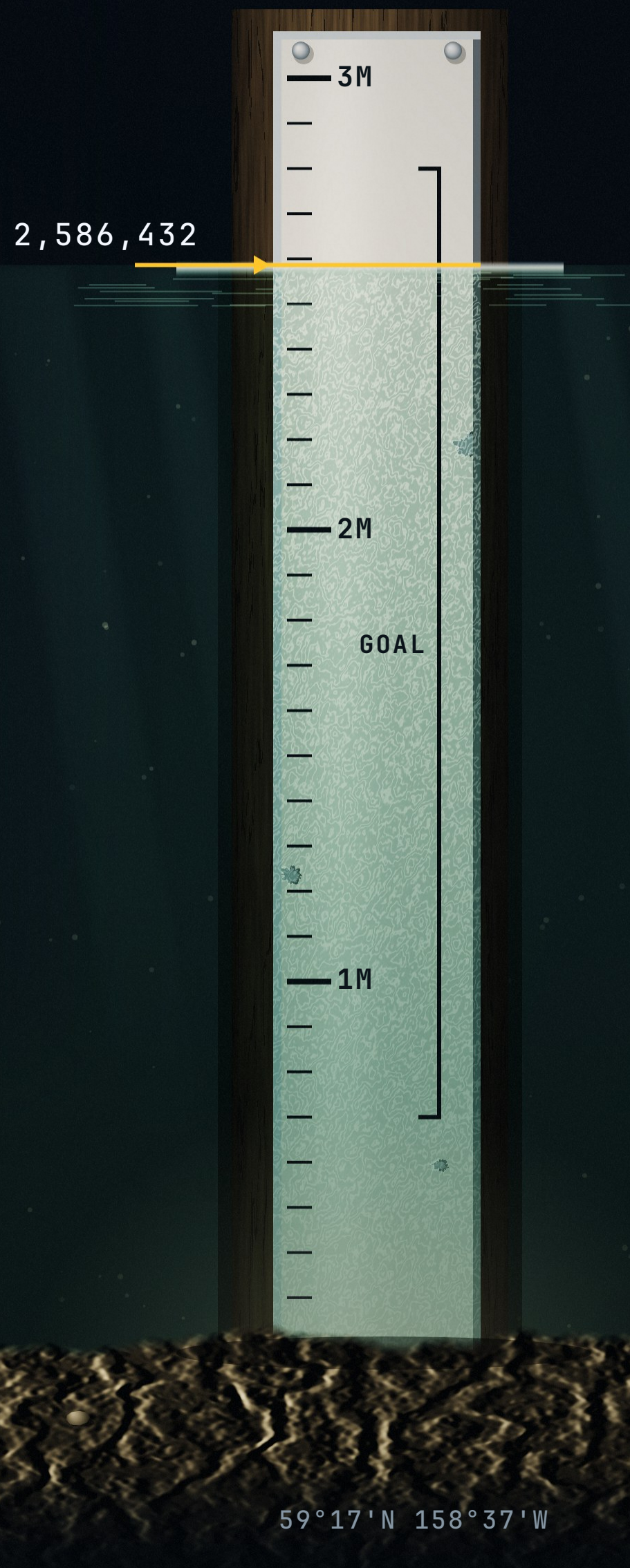
	TOWER	DRONE PILOT	SONAR
SEES	A person and a clicker	Drone video and AI	Sound
WHERE	Nine sites	Wood River	Naknek, first site
SINCE	1955	A pilot	June 1st to May 31st, 2028
FUNDING	Not stated	$188,300 plus $188,300 match, NFWF 2026 slate	$188,268, per National Fisherman
BUILT BY	Fish and Game crews	BBRSDA and partners	SeaSignal, Coastal Measures, BioSonics
GRADED AGAINST	Not stated	Tower counts	Not stated

NOAA and NFWF's 2026 slate funded 13 grants, $3.4 million, with $4.2 million matched. As of July, Fish and Game wasn't directly involved in the drone pilot.

THE YARDSTICK

Wood River's tower counted 2,586,432 sockeye this year.

Fish and Game's goal there is 700,000 to 2,800,000. The Kvichak, Naknek, Alagnak, Egegik and Wood were all inside their goals. The drone pilot is set to be compared against tower counts like this one.



59°17'N 158°37'W

Should the Naknek's machine count go live in season, or be checked against a tower first?

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