Faith McGruther, who recently retired. He was hired by the CORA board late February and came on board March 5.

“It’s been enjoyable so far,” Parker said. “The staff is good, knowledgeable, and understand their jobs.” In his first two weeks, he has been concentrating on securing additional funding for tribal programs, he added.

Parker, 43, is no stranger to either administration or tribal fishery issues. He comes to the job following a 12-year stint at the helm of Bay Mills Indian Community as its tribal chairman. Before that, he served as the tribe’s Housing Authority executive director. As BMIC chairman, he sat on the COTFMA board of directors and was a key player in the success of the negotiations to replace the 15-year Consent Order of 1985, which culminated in seven governments and U.S. District Court Judge Richard Enslen meeting at Bay Mills Indian Community to sign the 2000 Consent Decree. After the new agreement was signed and COTFMA evolved into CORA, Parker was elected chairman of the CORA board.

In 2001, Parker was honored with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Tribal Leader of the Year award. As executive director of CORA, Parker will be dealing with one issue for all the 1836 treaty tribes. “When at Bay Mills, I enjoyed working with other tribes to protect treaty rights, and in the development and growth of treaty rights,” he said. “This job allows me to continue to do that — not so much in a policy- and decision-making capacity, but in a facilitatory position.”

The new CORA executive director grew up on Bay Mills Indian Reservation and naturally developed an understanding of the significance of fishing to the Bay Mills people. Having lived through the court decisions, as a young man he understood the importance of treaty rights and retention. Today, he knows that the collective rights of the tribes to regulate the treaty fishery is just as important.

Parker wants to make sure that tribal fishers maintain their livelihood. He sees his biggest immediate challenge as securing additional funding.

Two tribes new to CORA — Little River and Little Traverse Bay Bands, who were confirmed in 1994, need base funding. And, Bay Mills, Sault Tribe, and Grand Traverse Band all need additional base funding. “The biggest challenge is funding,” he said. “Not only for tribal programs, but also for marketing and development of the fish.”

The additional monies are needed to adequately manage and regulate the treaty fishery, said Parker. “The 2000 Consent Decree really established a new paradigm in the management of fish stocks in the Great Lakes. We moved from quota TAC (total allowable catch) system to a more flexible system that is effort-based, and that requires additional funding to ensure we have all the information we need to implement it,” he said.

“It’s the cornerstone of 2000 Consent Decree — and the biggest challenge,” he added. Parker’s concern for adequate funding applies to both the short view and the long view — without it, “we may lose the right to self-regulate.”

In the long term, Parker’s goal is not so much management and regulation, but “more into new markets and the ability to add value to commercial fish harvest,” he said. Also of future concern to the CORA executive director is the potential impact of exotic species and other water quality and habitat concerns such as water diversions and pollution.

Parker fired out his other objectives: To work with the tribes to establish new markets for tribal harvest; To develop workshops and training sessions for the tribes, to help them with their new roles and responsibilities under the 2000 Consent Decree; To look for non-traditional funding (private sources, for example) sources for tribes’ management responsibilities and to develop the commercial fishery; To assist tribes to develop existing programs — whether its biological or public information and education; To make sure tribal interests are properly represented under various inter-governmental agencies that are involved in management of the Great Lakes; and, To oversee day-to-day operations.
**SETTLEMENT WORDING REKINDLES BATTLE**

Jacques LeBlanc talks to the Associated Press

By John Flesher

Associated Press Writer

MUNISING, Mich. (AP) — Jacques LeBlanc vividly remembers those scary nights in the early 1980s, when gunfire sometimes rang out as he placed fishing nets in the upper Great Lakes.

American Indian commercial fishermen such as LeBlanc were locked in a bitter dispute with sport anglers, who claimed tribal nets were snagging more than their fair share of the catch.

"We'd work at night to try and avoid attention," said LeBlanc, a member of the Bay Mills Indian Community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. "You'd be out in your boat and hear the shots flying at you and vee off at the last minute."

Tempers calmed when a federal judge approved a settlement in 1985. Now they're flaring again in Munising, a Lake Superior shoreline town of 2,500, and LeBlanc is a target once more.

It started in fall 2000, shortly after Bay Mills and four other tribes signed a 20-year treaty revision. Munising Bay is now used for only nine days of the year, LeBlanc says.

"What kind of a country do we live in where the government admits they messed up but says: 'Oh, well, ho, ho, there's nothing we can do?'" said Doug Miron, chairman of the Munising Bay Fish Committee, which is exploring a legal challenge.

Ekdahl has approached the tribes about amending the pact, but says they've shown little interest. For now, matters are stalled — and sport anglers are growing more frustrated.

"The DNR's got to do something ... or the fishery as we know it will be depleted," Miron said.

Defenders say the threats went both ways. "They said if we kept cutting their nets they'd bring the whole tribe up here and put their nets all around our fishing shanties," said Jacques LeBlanc, 38. "I'm not trying to pick a fight with anybody. But when I'm out there using gill nets, I'm exercising the rights he fought for."

There might be easier ways to make a living, he acknowledges. "But I'm a fisherman, it's all I want to be. I'd love to pass it on to my boys." Anglers are equally passionate.

The gill net, which resembles an over-sized fishing trap, has rights, but when they come off the line, the government admits they messed up. A fisherman, says his crew was first "to take advantage of the bay's new status, spending a week there in late 2000. Local anglers gave us a little hassle" but no big problems, he said.

"But in January 2001, LeBlanc and several helpers hauled gill nets onto the frozen bay. They cut holes and placed about 4,700 feet of netting below the ice."

"That night, vandals severed 14 surface lines attached to the nets — which could have allowed them to drift indefinitely, snagging and suffocating fish. The Indians managed to retrieve the netting but the culprit or culprits never caught."

LeBlanc says there was "talk around town ... they were going to burn my truck, my snowmobiles, they were going to shoot at me from the hills" overlooking the bay. Still, he continued fishing for several weeks with a police escort.

"Anglers say the threats went both ways. "They said if we kept cutting their nets they'd bring the whole tribe up here and put their nets all around our fishing shanties," said Troy Passinault of Munising.

Still, he continued fishing for several weeks, saying Indian crews will overfish the bay.

LeBlanc vividly remembers those scary nights in the early 1980s, when gunfire sometimes rang out as he placed fishing nets in the upper Great Lakes.

Jim Ekdahl, a Department of Natural Resources field deputy who represented Michigan in the negotiations, insists the new policy slipped into the compact by mistake as attorneys sent drafts back and forth.

"I've been scratching my head, as we all have been," he said.

"The decision has been made by the tribes to restrict tribal fishing prompted court rulings that upheld Indian treaty rights and led to the 1985 settlement."

"I often think of my dad when I'm on the lake; I guess it's where I connect with him," says Jacques LeBlanc, 38. "I'm not trying to pick a fight with anybody. But when I'm out there using gill nets, I'm exercising the rights he fought for."

"There might be easier ways to make a living, he acknowledges. "But I'm a fisherman, it's all I want to be. I'd love to pass it on to my boys." Anglers are equally passionate.

"I asked them if they'd be willing to quit their jobs until then and they said they couldn't do that," LeBlanc said. "Well, this is my job."

"I hadn't returned to Munising this winter, because unusually mild temperatures have prevented ice from forming. Craws from other tribes apparently have steered clear as well.

"Their absence has prevented more flare-ups, but it may be temporary," LeBlanc said. "It's no glitch," he said at home on the bay. "I asked them if they'd be willing to quit their jobs until then and they said they couldn't do that," LeBlanc said. "Well, this is my job."

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2002 winter bald eagle survey results for lower Michigan:

**LANSING**—Department of Natural Resources officials today announced results of the 2002 winter bald eagle survey, which produced 900 reported sightings from 1,021 voluntary eagle spotters in 69 Michigan counties. This year’s survey period, Jan. 1-15, occurred during unusually warm weather and use of snow-free water.

Three hundred forty-four eagles were sighted in the Upper Peninsula, 324 were counted in the southern Lower Peninsula and 322 eagles were sighted in the northern Lower Peninsula. Within specific counties, high sightings were reported in Monroe (70), Midland (58) and Chippewa counties (59). Many eagles were reported at or near cooling ponds and along open waterways.
Lake trout in egg stage and fry stage, products of the Little Traverse Bay Band Fishery Program. The Odana Fish Enhancement Facility produced fry for the first time last year.

LOOKING FOR FUNDS?

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation may be able to help

At last fall’s regional NAFWS conference in Bay Mills, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation representative Don Wikke made a presentation about the Foundation and what it has to offer, condensed below from last October’s Tribal Fishing newsletter:

Don Wikke, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation:

The Foundation’s focus is conservation. Part of its mission is to encourage public and private collaboration.

Foundation priorities are:

— Tall and mixed grass prairie,
— Aquatic conservation,
— Mississippi Alluvial Valley,
— Native American lands,
— Large conservation areas near urban centers, and
— Wildlife in agricultural settings.

The Foundation has given out 100 grants to tribes in the past decade but only two in this area, Wikke said, mostly because there was no area office in this region. He encouraged tribes to apply.

Grant sizes vary; they could be $5,000 or they could be $300,000. The median is $60,000, he said. The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation works on a pre-proposal basis. Send Wikke a couple of pages to look over. See <www.nfwf.org>, He also encouraged tribes to establish their own foundation.
Alaska fishermen find farmed salmon a formidable foe

By Wesley Loy

Alaska Dispatch News
ANCHORAGE (AP, Jan 13) — When Dick Jacobsen was a kid, his family had to abandon his home on South Bering Strait on Ungra Island off the South Alaska Peninsula. The island's industries had dried up, the people had fled and finally the school closed.

Now Jacobsen, a Sand Point resident and mayor of the Aleutians East Borough, is trying to prevent another such outcome.

“I’ve been a fisherman all my life,” he said. “I started fishing with my dad when I was 6. We can’t exist on what we’re doing anymore.”

Salmon fishing, a bedrock industry for more than a century, is withering.

The numbers have been tailing off from last summer’s harvest, and are bittersweet. Although the state remains blessed with salmon — nearly 175 million fish were landed last summer — fishermen took home only $216 million, less than half what they got 15 years ago.

Alaska once was king in world salmon markets, accounting for nearly one in every two fish available. Now, in just over a decade, it has slipped to fewer than one in five. Only foreign salmon farmers, which barely exist 20 years ago, make up for the lost ground.

Alaska’s salmon all return in erratic numbers during three or four summer months, forcing most of the catch to be frozen or canned and sometimes compromising quality. The salmon can still be plucked out of controlled supplies of fresh fish all year long.

No one is seriously talking about legalizing salmon farms, but big ideas in a new dawn are in play to reform the Alaska industry that so many used to make a living. They include lifting the ban on fish traps, buying out some fishermen and finding new markets for the catch.

The downturn in the industry in Alaska is happening at a time when global demand for salmon is exploding. Last year the world consumed 3.7 billion pounds of salmon, triple the amount of 20 years earlier. The salmon farms have won almost all of the new demand.

They still argue their willingness to assist us in collecting fish mortalities.”

The historic theme of Alaska salmon management has been to make this virus high.

There are few outward signs that a fish has the virus. The virus has been found in many lakes where there have not been reports of disease or mortalities of fish. The virus usually appears normal, although they may be lethargic, swim slowly and are less responsive to activity around them.

Dying fish often are seen near the surface and have difficulty remaining upright. Internal examination of such fish shows a cloudy or blackened swim bladder, which accounts for the cause of swimming problems. Red sores or other lesions occasionally may be seen on the skin of the fish, but these are secondary in nature and not part of the virus infection.

The DNR concurs with recommendations from the LBWM Workshop III, and reminds anglers and boaters to take the following steps to help prevent the spread of LMBV, as well as other undesirable pathogens and organisms, from one water body to another.

* Do not move fish or fish parts from one body of water to another, and do not release live bait into any water body.

* Clean or decontaminate equipment and boats racing around, each a small structure of Alaska’s salmon industry: Thousands of small structures off shore to harvest salmon, triple the amount of 20 years ago, and main- one salmon fishery but many, different salmon provinces last summer and recently sent a letter to President Bush asking for the same sort of federal aid an agricultural state might get in a drought.

Fish farmers now make more than three times as much salmon as Alaska’s catch. Seafood industry watchers say farmers who raise salmon in hundreds of ocean pens along the coasts of Chile, Scotland, Canada and even of Washington and Oregon have glutted markets with cheap fish, creating record low wholesale prices.

The main reason why Bristol Bay fishermen took home only 40 cents a pound for their catch last summer, the lowest price ever, is the price paid for the fish to the consumer is about $2.40 a pound at the dock, making an average six-pound sockeye worth more than a barrel of Alaska crude.

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The big economic problem of Alaska salmon management has been to spread the considerable wealth of salmon fishing to as many Alaskans as possible and prevent social problems. Farmed fish and inefficiency can agitate them all to varying extents.

Largemouth bass (LMBV) is one of more than 100 naturally occurring viruses that affect fish, and is closely related to viruses found in frogs and other amphibians. Its origin and how it is spread are unknown. The virus is not known to infect other amphibians. Its origin and how it is spread are unknown. The virus is not known to infect other amphibians.

Since then, the virus has been detected in wild fish from North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan.

In fall 2000, biologists from the Michigan and Indiana Department of Natural Resources discovered the presence of LMBV while jointly investigating a die-off of largemouth bass in Lake George, located on the Michigan-Indiana border near I-69.

The virus was also detected this year in northern Indiana, two additional Michigan lakes and three Illinois and Michigan.

Illinois and Michigan; we still do not know how largemouth bass populations.

The virus was located on the Michigan-Indiana border near I-69, and the furthest north that the virus had been found.

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* Handle bass as gently as possible if you intend to release them.

* Stage tournaments during cooler weather, so fish caught will not be so stressed.

“Some folks have jumped to the conclusion that Alaska can’t beat the salmon farmers, so it shouldn’t join them. That’s bunk,” said Brad Warren, editor of the trade journal Pacific Fishing.

The problem is, the Alaska industry and state officials never had to compete before the farms came along, he said. So the industry was shaped too much to meet social goals, making it highly inefficient.

As it stands, some parts of the salmon business are competing better than others.

Alaska’s coast supports not one salmon fishery but many, from Ketchikan to Cordova.

Cook Inlet to Kodiak, Chignik to False Pass, Bristol Bay to Nome.

Each has its own focus, its own group of fishermen and packers, its own markets and its own problems.

Farmed fish and inefficiency aggravate them all to varying extents.

Farmed salmon hits places like Bristol Bay and Chignik the hardest, as the high-value red salmon from these areas compete most directly with farmed in the vital Japan market. An exception is the Copper River fishery based in Cordova, where fishermen have marketed their May king and red runs into an enthusiastic first-of-the-year salmon cult following in the Lower 48.

Doing nothing is not an option for the industry or the state, said Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer, who led recent strategy sessions on saving the salmon business.

The economy of coastal Alaska is very dependent on commercial fishing,“ she said. “It’s a big deal.”

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