

Remote, fly-in lakes

Several lakes on Baranof and Chichagof islands have been stocked with or have naturally occurring populations of rainbow or cutthroat trout. The U.S. Forest Service maintains public recreation cabins at some of these remote sites (see chart and map, p. 6 and 7), where you can spend a few days in the wilderness, yet enjoy the comforts of a snug cabin with an oil or wood stove. Cabin rental fees are minimal, but reservations are required (see the Visitor Information inset on page 3 for the USFS address in Sitka). Because the cabins are popular both with fishers and hunters, reservations must be made well ahead of time.

On Chichagof Island, Goulding Lake, Suloia Lake, and Sitkoh Lake have USFS cabins. The Goulding Lake chain comprises four lakes that contain cut-

throat trout and Dolly Varden. As in most landlocked lakes with this species combination, the cutthroat are dominant and provide an excellent sport fishery. Suloia Lake is also landlocked, with Dolly Varden and rainbow trout. Sitkoh Lake—open to the ocean—has salmon runs (except kings) and sea-run Dolly Varden, cutthroat, and steelhead populations. Sitkoh Lake and Creek also has resident cutthroat/rainbow trout and Dolly Varden.

Baranof Island has several landlocked lakes stocked with rainbow trout, including Avoss and Davidof lakes, where there are USFS cabins. Other lakes (Eva, Salmon, Plotnikof, and Redoubt) are open to salt water and have runs of salmon, as well as trout and char. Baranof Lake is a landlocked system with good cutthroat trout fishing. These lakes are each unique, and a “lake profile” is available from the ADF&G Sitka office.

Chichagof Island's scenic coast

Chichagof Island's outer coast is a unique area with many small offshore islands, protected bays, pristine lakes and streams, and abundant sea life. Designated by the U.S. Forest Service as the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness, it has few facilities—any privately owned land in the area is mostly used by the Chichagof-Hirst mine. The wilderness is popular with kayakers and campers who enjoy the challenge of survival in the wild. Besides its cabins on Goulding and Suloia lakes, the Forest Service maintains two cabins at salt water on the outer Chichagof coast (White Sulphur Springs and Greentop). Air charter operators, fishing guides, charter boat operators, or lodges in nearby communities can all provide transportation.

Fish populations in many lakes and streams have not been studied in detail, and some runs of fish are probably known only by a few individuals. Available freshwater species include cutthroat, rainbow, and steelhead trout and all salmon except kings. Poorly developed soils and rocky substrate here contribute to limited fish production. Nutrients are scarce, and flushing rates high, so fish are smaller and grow slowly. Anglers can help preserve fish populations by practicing catch-and-release and harvesting conservatively.

Stream fishing is seasonal—some of the best salmon fishing occurs in late summer and fall. Dolly Varden are abundant in several streams (Black River and Waterfowl Cove Creek, for instance) from early July to late August. After September they find lakes to overwinter, then return to salt water again in early spring. One of their favorite overwintering areas is Ford Arm Lake.

The most productive fishing is in systems open to salt water, where one or more lakes are connected by streams: Surge Lake (on Yakobi Island), Takanis, and Klag Bay lakes (west Chichagof Island), Lake Anna, and Ford Arm Lake, for example. Each has its own mix of sockeye and coho, as well as cutthroat, rainbow, and some steelhead. Pink and chum salmon enter the lower river seasonally. Klag Bay Lakes and Surge Lake are two of the favorite systems.

Surge Lake, only a few feet above salt water, actually has salt water in its lower depths. With its small islands and picturesque view of rugged peaks, it is ideal for canoeing, with a short portage from salt water. There are no facilities or maintained trails, but tent sites are plentiful along the open shoreline, where there are well-established game trails. The surrounding forest has open understory.

In 1995, ADF&G biologist Art Schmidt wrote of Surge Lake: “When I visited in late August, a large run of sockeye were spawning. Coho salmon were also entering the lake, and fry traps had caught numerous rainbow and Dolly Varden. I haven't visited the lake in early spring, but I suspect steelhead could also be found in the inlet streams.”

