



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Safe-Guarding Fish Habitat

Increasing coverage of Alaska's Anadromous Waters Catalog

USFWS/Jeff Anderson

Habitat: fish can't live without it!

With the exception of a few fishless lakes and the upper reaches of very high-gradient mountain streams, fish habitat is everywhere. The diversity of intact habitat still available in Alaska (from tiny headwaters to huge braided rivers, clearwater side channels, and wetlands) gives fish life-saving options when times get tough, and is the foundation for stable, worldclass fisheries.

How well-protected is their habitat?

In Alaska, fish habitat protection authorities are limited by the extent to which fish distribution and habitat use has been formally documented. For example, some protections provided by the State of Alaska's Anadromous Fish Act apply only to waters specified in the *Catalog of Waters Important for*

the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes (this catalog and its associated atlas are maintained by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, ADFG).

Alaska encompasses a huge land area and many waters have yet to be surveyed for fish; an unknown number of small (but still important) waters haven't even been mapped. ADFG estimates that over 20,000 waterbodies used by anadromous fish have not yet been specified in the Catalog.

Increasing protections for fish

Our Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Offices are working to increase the coverage of anadromous waters in the Catalog. For example, our Anchorage fisheries biologists consult with our Habitat Branch and ADFG to sample unsurveyed areas where habitat

degradation is on-going or expected to occur. So far, these areas include streams, lakes, and wetlands in the Petersville Road area, the developed core of the Mat-Su Borough around Wasilla and Palmer, and north of the Knik River.

With Alaska Sustainable Salmon Funds, our Fairbanks biologists have worked with partners including ADFG, Rapids Research Station, and Ft. Wainwright's Natural Resources and Warrior Transition units to document anadromous waters in the upper Yukon, Chena, and Tanana Rivers.

Our field crews also sample streams opportunistically when carrying out other field projects; when we document anadromous fish in waters not specified in the Catalog we submit nominations to ADFG. We've also provided funds to The Nature Conservancy and Chickaloon Native Association via the National Fish Habitat Partnership to expand coverage in Bristol Bay and Mat-Su, respectively.

The Anadromous Fish Act (Alaska Statute 41.14.870) requires prior notification and approval from ADFG's Division of Habitat for all activities within or across **specified** anadromous waters, and all instream activities affecting those waters.



One of our Kenai Field Office crews checking traps for juvenile anadromous fish.

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