

Public Testimony Sign-Up Sheet

Agenda Item B- Reports

12/08

	NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	AFFILIATION
1/6	Kenny Down	Freezer Longline Coalition
2/6	Dan Hull	CDFW
3/6	Karen Petruikoff/Iver Malutin	AK Native Subsistence Habitat Working Group
4/6	Dave Benton	MCA
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

NOTE to persons providing oral or written testimony to the Council: Section 307(1)(I) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act prohibits any person "to knowingly and willfully submit to a Council, the Secretary, or the Governor of a State false information (including, but not limited to, false information regarding the capacity and extent to which a United State fish processor, on an annual basis, will process a portion of the optimum yield of a fishery that will be harvested by fishing vessels of the United States) regarding any matter that the Council, Secretary, or Governor is considering in the course of carrying out this Act.

Executive Director's Report

MSA Update

Unfortunately I do not have any meaningful update on major MSA reauthorization issues at this time. Following the close of the comment periods on the proposed rules for annual catch limits and the NEPA process, my understanding is that NMFS forwarded draft final rules for both of these issues to OMB for review. I would note that the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) subcommittee was allowed to provide input towards the final rule for the NEPA revisions, resulting in a draft final rule that accommodated many of our concerns. At this time however, neither the NEPA rule nor the ACL rule has come out of the OMB review process. As more time passes, I think it becomes more unlikely that either rule will be finalized during the current administration.

Cooperative Reports

We have received preliminary year-end reports from all of the AFA pollock cooperatives, consistent with the requirement for filings by December 1. These are available upon request, noting that final reports (complete with full year information) will be provided in time for, and presented at, our February 2009 meeting.

Aleut Corporation annual report on pollock

Per the requirements of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, and in reference to the AI directed pollock fishery allocation to the Aleut Corporation, Item B-1(a) is a letter from Mr. Thomas Mack, president of the Aleut Corporation. This letter summarizes their 2008 pollock fishing activities, noting one vessel harvesting just under one million pounds of pollock, or about 2.5% of the total allocation of 15,500 mt.

Steller sea lions – 2008 Survey Results Released

On November 17, 2008, the National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML) released a report that summarized the 2008 survey of Steller sea lions in Alaska. The survey report was sent out in a Council mailing, and there won't be a specific Protected Resources report at this Council meeting. But to summarize the SSL survey report, NMML notes that this was the first complete survey of the entire western stock of SSL since 2004 and the first complete survey of the eastern stock of SSL since 2002. The report notes that trends in numbers of adults and juveniles (collectively termed non pups) are stable or slightly declining over the period 2004-2008 following a 4-year period of population increase between 2000 and 2004. NMML scientists note that SSL counts in the central and western Aleutian Islands are declining, the eastern Aleutians and eastern GOA is increasing, with the remainder of the GOA showing an increase from 2004-2007 but a decline from 2007-2008. The report is available at <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/nmml/pdf/SSLNon-Pups2008memo.pdf>

Preliminary halibut numbers for 2009

Item B-1(b) is a recent news release from the IPHC announcing the preliminary staff recommendations for 2009 catch limits. You will notice reductions in most areas, particularly Area 2C once again down nearly 30% from the previous year. The IPHC will be meeting in Vancouver, B.C. during the week of January 13-17 to establish final catch limits.

MSC news release

Item B-1(c) is a recent news release from the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) reiterating its certification for the Alaska pollock fisheries. This news release was issued to help refute recent claims by some organizations of irresponsible, unsustainable management of our pollock fisheries.

ANPR on best available science and peer review

As I reported in October, there is an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) on revisions to National Standard 2, the use of 'best available science', and the role of SSCs in the peer review process. Item B-1(d) is a copy of that FR notice, with comments due by December 17. We have drafted some initial comments, but are expecting further input from our SSC this week, after which I will provide the Council with more developed comments for your review, noting we have to finalize those comments and submit them prior to the end of our meeting.

Report from NMFS Habitat Division

For your information, Item B-1(e) is a year-end report highlighting activities and accomplishments of the NMFS Alaska Region Habitat Conservation Division.

Events this week

On Tuesday, December 9, an industry presentation/Q&A is scheduled on the Chinook salmon incentive programs under development. That will be in the AP meeting room (Dillingham/Katmai Room) starting at 6:00 pm.

Tonight, Wednesday, December 10 at about 6:00 pm the USCG will be making a presentation on Arctic issues. The presentation is open to all and will be here in the Aleutian Room.

The Council has an Executive Session scheduled for Friday during an extended lunch break, to discuss 2009 appointments to the AP, SSC, and PNCLAC.

As is to be expected during the Christmas season, we have to break down and vacate this meeting room on Friday and Saturday evenings this week. We have to recess no later than 5:00 pm on those evenings and clear the room as quickly as possible.

Finally, we have a notable guest joining us for some brief comments this morning. Mr. John Harris, Speaker of the House of Representatives, will be here later this morning to address the Council. This should happen either just before or just after our morning break.

February meeting in Seattle

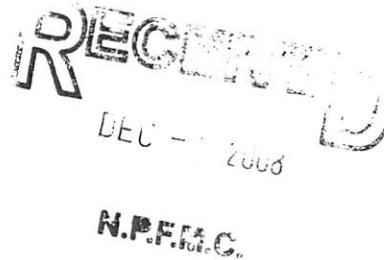
During the week of February 1 – 10 we will be meeting again at the Renaissance Madison Hotel in Downtown Seattle (the construction project is now complete!). We have a room block with a rate of \$152 plus tax, which is open until January 9, or until we limit out on the room block. For the public please ask for the "North Pacific Fisheries" block when you call 1-800-546-9184. Call soon if you hope to get on our limited room block. Council, SSC, AP, and most agency staff are already on the rooming list, **but please call by January 9 to confirm your reservation and the specific dates of your stay.**

Dr. Bill Clark retiring

After numerous years as scientist with the IPHC, Dr. Bill Clark is retiring and this will be his last meeting as a member of our SSC. The IPHC has nominated a replacement for Bill on our SSC, which the Council will review later this week. I am pleased to note that the IPHC is willing to designate Bill as its representative on our groundfish Plan Teams, so hopefully he will continue to participate in our process through that forum.

November 27th, 2008

Chris Oliver
Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 W 4th Ave Suite 306
Anchorage, Alaska 99501



Re: Aleut Enterprise AI Pollock Report

Dear Chris,

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004 that requires the AI directed pollock fishery to be allocated to The Aleut Corporation for the purpose of economic development in Adak, Alaska. In implementing the allocation the Council requested an annual report on its use.

The Aleut Corporation would like to take this opportunity to provide a report to the North Pacific Management Council on the use of the directed pollock fishing allocation in the Aleutian Islands for 2008.

The NPFMC set the AI pollock TAC at 19,000 tons and after deducting CDQ and an incidental catch allowance the directed fishing allocation for 2008 for The Aleut Corporation was 15,500 metric tons. The regulations promulgated as Steller Sea Lion Mitigation measures require that all directed pollock fishing in the AI occur outside Critical Habitat.

Directed Fishing

The Aleut Corporation offered the use of its pollock allocation in 2008 for directed fishing for vessels willing to explore outside SSL-CH.

Consistent with the purpose of economic development of Adak, we made our allocation available on a priority basis for catcher vessels delivering pollock to Adak. Letters were sent to United Catcher Boats offering its vessels use of the quota without royalty for delivery for processing in Adak.

Letters were also sent to each of the AFA CP companies offering the use of the pollock allocation. No Catcher Processors expressed interest in fishing our allocation.

One vessel, the FV Muir Milach did some fishing in March outside SSL-CH. This fishing occurred in a small area outside CH northwest of Atka in the area that was the subject of the 2006 EFP survey. It harvested 856,243 lbs of pollock which was delivered to Adak. .

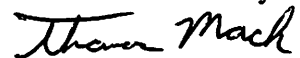
We have attached this year's list of authorized participants for the harvest and processing of our allocation.

Economic Development of Adak

The total harvest of our allocation in 2008 was 388 metric tons, or 2.5% of our allocation. Obviously this amount of harvest has contributed nothing toward the goal of economic development of Adak. Adak continues to be a community in an economic crisis with no real access to pollock, and no shoreside delivery protections for other the species of groundfish resources in the area.

We look forward to continue to working with the Council, NMFS, and the SSLMC to provide pollock fishing opportunity to portions of SSL-CH in the AI similar to what has been done for Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska fishing communities.

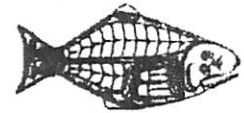
Thank you for the opportunity to report on the progress of using our allocation for the economic development of Adak.

Sincerely


Thomas Mack
 President, TAC

Authorized Participants: 2008 AI directed Pollock fishery

Participant Type	Vessel or Processor Name	ADF&G / USCG Numbers	FFP/FPP Number	AFA Permit Number
CV	MUIR MILACH	41021 / 615524	480	480
CV	BRISTOL EXPLORER	55923/647985	3007	3007
CV	NORTHWEST EXPLORER	36808/609384	3002	3002
CV	PACIFIC EXPLORER	50759/678237	3010	3010
CV	OCEAN EXPLORER	81073/678236	3011	3011
CV	INTREPID EXPLORER	64'105/88598	4993	4993
Shoreside Processor	Adak Fisheries LLC		27101	

INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION*News Release*

November 25, 2008

**International Pacific Halibut Commission Staff Preliminary Catch
Limit Recommendations: 2009**

In making catch limit recommendations for 2009, staff has considered the results of the analytic assessment, changes in the commercial and survey indices used to monitor the stock, estimated recruitment of incoming year classes, and a harvest policy that reflects coastwide policy goals. The staff also drew on the outcome of both the September 2008 Biomass Apportionment Workshop and recent regional meetings with industry. Detailed results of these additional investigations will be reported in the 2008 Report of Assessment and Research Activities. Ongoing tag returns from the coastwide PIT tagging program continue to demonstrate that regulatory areas cannot be treated as closed management units. Changes in the stock biomass as indicated by our analytic assessment as well as changes in relative abundance indices from our surveys and the commercial fishery were also influential in our recommendations for 2009.

With the exceptions of Areas 2C, 4A, and 4D commercial catch per unit effort (CPUE) in 2008 decreased from 2007 values. The 2008 IPHC setline survey CPUE values increased in Areas 2B, 4A, 4B, and 4D but decreased in all other areas. These fluctuations were generally in the $\pm 10\%$ range.

The analysis of optimum harvest rates for the coastwide assessment conducted in 2006 resulted in a target harvest rate of 20% of coastwide exploitable biomass. The staff examined multiple alternatives, including industry suggestions, for apportioning the estimated coastwide exploitable biomass among regulatory areas and concluded that the use of the IPHC setline survey data offered the most standardized and consistent data with which to achieve this partitioning. However, the staff also recognized some regional differences in hook competition with other species and applied an adjustment to accommodate that feature. Accordingly, the distribution of biomass, as determined by the three-year average CPUE of legal-sized fish obtained on the stock assessment survey adjusted for hook competition, was used to partition the coastwide exploitable biomass estimate into regulatory area biomass totals. The staff also removed an adjustment that was applied in Area 2A for the 2008 apportionment following reanalysis of the depth distribution of survey data compared with bottom depth distribution. While the 20% harvest rate is appropriate for the majority of the stock, a harvest rate of 15% is indicated by the analysis of productivity for Areas 4B and 4CDE conducted in 2005, and a similar analysis for Area 4A conducted in 2008. Therefore, staff recommended Catch Limits for Area 4 use a 15% harvest rate. Fishery statistics and biological characteristics of halibut in Area 3B are also of some concern to staff and a detailed analysis of this area will be conducted in 2009.

Catch Limit Recommendations for 2009

The staff recommendations totaling 54.01 million pounds for 2009 are presented in the following table. The Area 2A recommendation includes all removals (commercial treaty Tribes, and sport) allocated by the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan. Area 4CDE is treated as a single regulatory unit by the Commission although the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan partitions the Commission catch limit into limits for the individual regulatory areas. The Area 2B catch limit recommendation includes totals for the commercial and sport fisheries. The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans will allocate the adopted catch limit between the sport and commercial fisheries. The catch limit recommendations are made with the assumption that both Canada and the U.S. will manage to their domestic targets for sport fish catch.

The use of a coastwide assessment and apportionment of coastwide biomass based on survey estimates of distribution creates some substantial changes in Total Constant Exploitation Yield (Total CEY) and recommended catch limits among areas, compared to previous assessments. Lower recommended catch limits are identified for Areas 2, 3A, 4A, and 4CDE while Areas 3B and 4B have somewhat higher recommended catch limits. These differences are associated with the different distribution of biomass associated with survey apportionment of a coastwide total biomass, compared with the previous biomass distribution estimated from closed-area assessments, as well as CPUE changes in both the survey and the commercial fishery. As noted in the 2007 stock assessment, the distribution of biomass based on survey estimates is more consistent with other estimates of biomass distribution that are independent of the stock assessment.

The staff continues to recommend a slow rate of increase in catch limits when estimated CEY is increasing and a more rapid reduction of catch limits when CEY is decreasing (a Slow Up - Fast Down policy). For Areas 2, 3A, 4A, and 4CDE the staff recommends catch limits that are lower by one-half of the difference between 2008 catch limits and the estimated fishery CEYs for 2009. For Areas 3B, and 4B, the staff recommends an increase over the 2008 catch limit equivalent to one-third of the difference between the 2008 catch limit and the estimated 2009 fishery CEY.

The staff recognizes that adoption of the coastwide assessment and survey apportionment results in a significant shift in the estimated distribution of exploitable biomass. This analysis concludes that exploitation rates on the eastern portion of the stock have been too high in the past decade, resulting in lower biomass in Area 2 than would be realized if harvest rates had been near the target level. In the longer term, a lowered harvest rate will permit rebuilding of the exploitable biomass in Area 2 and an increase in available yield. The pace of that rebuilding will be affected by the strength of year classes recruiting to the fishery over the next several years.

These recommendations, along with public and industry views on them, will be considered by IPHC Commissioners and their advisors at the IPHC Annual Meeting in Vancouver, BC Canada, during January 13-16, 2009. These recommendations are preliminary and, as final data are included in the assessment, may be updated for the Annual Meeting but are not expected to change significantly.

Proposals concerning changes to catch limits should be submitted to the Commission

by December 31, 2008. Catch limit proposals are available on the Commission's web page (<http://www.iphc.washington.edu/halcom/default.htm>) or from the Commission's office. Additional details about the Annual Meeting can also be found on the web page.

Table 1. IPHC staff recommended catch limits for 2009, by IPHC regulatory area (million lbs, net weight). The 2008 fishery catch limits are included for comparison.

Regulatory Area	2008 Fishery Catch Limit	2009 IPHC Staff Recommended Fishery Catch Limit
2A ^a	1.22	0.86
2B ^b	9.00	6.96
2C	6.21	4.47
3A	24.22	22.53
3B	10.90	11.67
4A	3.10	2.65
4B	1.86	1.94
4CDE ^c	3.89	2.93
Total	60.40	54.01

^a Includes sport, tribal, and commercial fisheries.

^b Includes sport and commercial fisheries.

^c Individual catch limits for Areas 4C, 4D, and 4E are determined by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council catch sharing plan.

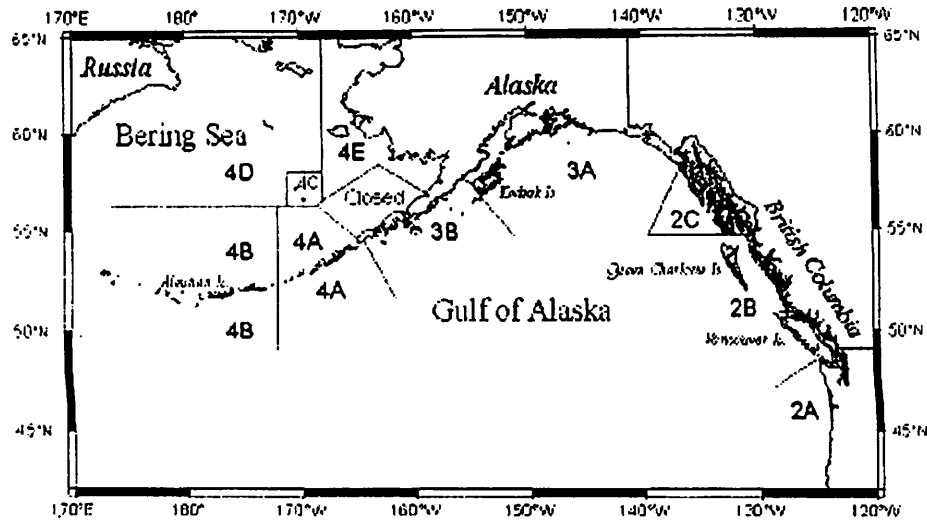


Figure 1. International Pacific Halibut Commission Regulatory Areas

[\[Printable PDF File\]](#) [\[Home\]](#) [\[News Releases\]](#)



MSC Certification of Alaska Pollock

MSC reiterates fishery certified as sustainable in response to Greenpeace claims that stock is in danger of collapse

Dec. 8, 2008 (Seattle, WA) – The Alaska pollock fishery remains certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) independent third-party certification system despite Greenpeace USA's campaign to raise doubts about the status of the fishery.

Commercial seafood buyers and consumers around the world who rely on MSC to provide assurance that they are sourcing sustainably caught seafood should be confident that the Alaska pollock fishery continues to be certified to the MSC's widely accepted and rigorous scientific standard.

Under the MSC certification program, independent, objective certifiers using teams of qualified scientists assess the health of the stock, the impact of the fishery on the ecosystem and the management system that oversees the fishery. The Alaska pollock fishery became MSC-certified in 2005 after a rigorous review and undergoes annual audits to assure it continues to meet the MSC standard.

Alaska pollock stocks are currently exhibiting a cyclical downturn, which is natural in wild fish populations and in this case carefully studied by fishery scientists. The Alaska pollock fishery has a reputation as one of the world's best managed fisheries because of both its tracking and reaction to the fluctuations of the fish population. In 2008, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC), the entity responsible for managing the fishery, took action to reduce the allowable catch to account for the cyclical downturn. The NPFMC is currently looking at a further reduction for 2009.

The Council's management actions are based on proposals made by a committee of scientists that continually monitors the size of the population. Having a management system that looks at the best science and makes management decisions that are precautionary is among key criteria for a fishery to qualify for and maintain MSC certification.

Facts about the Alaska pollock fishery:

- According to many fishery scientists, the Alaska pollock resource has been harvested sustainably for decades.
- Pollock fishery managers have historically taken a precautionary approach and set annual harvest levels that are actually less than the acceptable biological catch levels set by a panel of federal, state and academic scientists.
- There is 100 percent observer coverage, with each vessel carrying 1-2 federal fishery observers to monitor and record catches and conduct scientific research; observers are also assigned to all pollock onshore processing facilities.

- There is very low by-catch – pollock comprises 99.5 percent of what is caught in the net.
- Significant closed areas have been established throughout the fishing grounds to protect Steller sea lion rookeries and feeding areas.
- There is full utilization of the fish caught with edible portions going to seafood products and inedible portions used in non-consumable products.
- In addition to this fishery being certified under the MSC program, several respected environmental organizations list pollock as “green” on their buyer guides.

Facts about the MSC third-party certification process

- All MSC-certified fisheries go through exhaustive third-party review backed by extensive science and data. They also undergo annual surveillance audits.
- The MSC standard, which is fully consistent with United Nations guidelines, was developed over nearly two years of international consultation with leading scientists, academics, environmentalists, industry representatives, government officials and other experts.
- The MSC program has the support of many environmental NGOs. 14 environmental organizations in North America that have committed to a “Common Vision for Environmentally Sustainable Seafood” in working with seafood businesses, have endorsed the MSC as an important initiative and encourage businesses to purchase MSC-certified products as part of their sustainable seafood policies. Those organizations include World Wildlife Fund, Environmental Defense Fund, Monterey Bay Aquarium, National Resources Defense Council, Ocean Conservancy, David Suzuki Society, Blue Ocean Institute, New England Aquarium, Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society, Ecology Action Center, FishWise, Sierra Club BC, Living Oceans Society and FishChoice.
- While MSC is widely recognized as the leading global seafood certification and eco-labeling program with a high standard for sustainability and environmental responsibility, this does not preclude any individual or organization disagreeing with certain aspects or outcomes of the certification process. The process is public and open, and any interested parties are encouraged to raise issues or objections, which are taken into account in the certifier’s examination and assessment of the fishery.
- MSC-labeled seafood is fully traceable throughout the supply chain.
- More information, including detailed fishery assessment reports, is available at www.msc.org.

About Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

The MSC is an international non-profit organization that was set up in 1997 to promote solutions to the problem of overfishing. The MSC runs the only widely recognized environmental certification and eco-labeling program for wild capture fisheries. It is the only seafood eco-label that is consistent with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards and UN FAO guidelines for fisheries certification. The FAO “Guidelines for the Eco-labeling of Fish

and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries" require that credible fishery certification and eco-labeling schemes include:

- Objective, third-party fishery assessment utilizing scientific evidence;
- Transparent processes with built-in stakeholder consultation and objection procedures;
- Standards based on the sustainability of target species, ecosystems and management practices.

The MSC has offices in London, Seattle, Tokyo, Sydney, The Hague, Edinburgh and Berlin. In total, more than 140 fisheries are engaged in the MSC program with 38 certified, 86 under assessment and another 20 to 30 in confidential pre-assessment. Together the fisheries record annual catches of more than 5 million tons of seafood. Of fish for human consumption, they represent more than 42 percent of the world's wild salmon catch, 40 percent of the world's prime whitefish catch and 18 percent of the world's lobster catch. Worldwide, more than 1,900 seafood products resulting from the certified fisheries bear the blue MSC eco-label. For more information, please visit www.msc.org

is destroyed, recolonization would be impossible and the population supported by that breeding pond would be extirpated.

Habitat loss on private lands is an imminent threat that is compounded by a variety of other factors. Fire suppression on private lands occupied by the frosted flatwoods salamander represents one of the biggest threats to the species' habitat and the continued existence of the species on these sites. However, 62 percent of frosted flatwoods salamander populations have an improved chance of surviving demographic and environmental stochasticity given that the distribution of breeding sites occurs within an adult salamander's dispersal distance.

We believe that, when combining the effects of historical, current, and projected habitat loss and degradation, historical and ongoing drought, and the exacerbating effects of disease, predation, small population size, and isolation, the frosted flatwoods salamander continues to be likely to become an endangered species throughout all of its range within the foreseeable future. We believe these threats, particularly the threats to populations resulting from habitat degradation and fragmentation, small population size, and drought, are current and are projected to continue into the future. We have determined that these threats are operating on the species and its habitat with a moderate degree of magnitude throughout most of its range and with a moderate degree of severity, as discussed above.

Based on the best available scientific and commercial information, we have determined that the preferred action is for the frosted flatwoods salamander to retain its status as a threatened species under the Act. Without the protection of the Act, significant management of threats would likely occur on public lands; however, there is still substantial risk of loss of ponds to drought and disease and, on private lands, a variety of potential threats (for example, introduction of fish, predation, pesticides), and development. As discussed previously, declines resulting from drought can occur within only a few years. In the case of the frosted flatwoods salamander, 38 percent of populations have only one breeding pond. If the habitat at that site is destroyed, recolonization would be impossible and the population supported by that breeding pond would be extirpated. This could occur within a few years given recurring drought conditions and existing threats. While not in immediate danger of extinction, the frosted flatwoods salamander is

likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range if the present trends that negatively affect the species, and its limited and restricted habitat, continue. Furthermore, because these threats to the species are of comparable magnitude and severity across all of the species' range, we have determined that an analysis of whether a specific portion of the range might require a different listing status is not warranted at this time.

Available Conservation Measures

For additional information on available conservation measures, please refer to the proposed rule published in the Federal Register on August 13, 2008 (73 FR 47258).

References Cited

A complete list of all references cited in this document is available upon request from the Field Supervisor Ray Aycock, Mississippi Field Office (see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT).

Author(s)

The primary authors of this package are the staff of the Mississippi Field Office (see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT).

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: September 5, 2008.

Lyle Laverty,
Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

[FR Doc. E8-21878 Filed 9-17-08; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4310-55-8

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 600

[Docket No. 0808041047-81182-01]

RIN 0648-AW62

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Scientific and Statistical Committees; Peer Review; National Standard Guidelines

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Advanced notice of proposed rulemaking; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that it is considering, and is seeking public

comment on proposed rulemaking to revise National Standard 2 (NS2) guidelines regarding use of best scientific information available, in light of reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). NMFS is considering modifying the language describing the content and purpose of the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report or related documents, and adding language regarding peer review processes, the role of the scientific and statistical committees (SSCs) of the Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils), and the relationship between peer reviews and SSCs.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before 5 p.m., local time, December 17, 2008.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by 0648-AW62, by any one of the following methods:

- Electronic Submissions: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal eRulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov>.

- Fax: Attn: William Michaels 301-713-1875.

- Mail: William Michaels, NOAA Fisheries Service, Office of Science and Technology, 1315 East-West Highway, F/ST4, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Instructions: All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All Personal Identifying Information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

NMFS will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bill Michaels, 301-713-2363 x136.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On January 12, 2007, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 (MSRA) was signed into law. The MSRA amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Act included provisions to improve the use of science in decision-making, provide for a stronger role for Councils' SSCs and enhance peer review processes.

Currently, the NS2 guidelines address the use of best scientific information available to support fishery management actions, prescribe the content and purpose of SAFE reports or similar

documents, and assign responsibility for the preparation and review of SAFE reports to the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary). SAFE reports are intended to provide the Councils with a summary of current scientific information available to make management decisions and are intended to contain information upon which Councils are to base harvest specifications, including annual harvest levels from each stock. At this time, NS2 does not specifically mention that the SAFE should include SSC recommendations for acceptable biological catch from either the SSC or peer review process (established under Section 302(g)(1)(E) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act). SSC recommendations for acceptable biological catch are the basis upon which each Council is to set annual catch limits (ACLs), and ACLs are not to exceed these fishing level recommendations per Section 302(h)(6) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. NMFS is considering, and is seeking public comment on how to revise the discussion of SAFE reports in the NS2 to include the scientific recommendations that are to be provided by the SSCs under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, as reauthorized.

NMFS is inviting comment on the extent to which the NS2 guidelines should provide guidance as to what constitutes "best scientific information available." In 2004, the National Research Council (NRC) of the National

Academies was charged with examining the application of the term "best scientific information available" as the basis for fishery conservation and management measures required under NS2 and recommended approaches for a more uniform application of the standard within the context of current and future fisheries management efforts. The NRC recommendations can be found in their publication, "Improving the Use of the Best Scientific Information Available' Standard in Fisheries Management" (NRC 2004, <http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php>). Although NMFS has informally adopted many of the NRC recommendations, this advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) is an opportunity to solicit and incorporate recommendations into the NS2 guidance.

Section 302(g)(1)(E) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act provides that "(T)he Secretary and each Council may establish a peer review process for that Council for scientific information used to advise the Council about the conservation and management of the fishery. The review process, which may include existing committees or panels, is deemed to satisfy the requirements of the guidelines issued pursuant to section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal year 2001," otherwise known as the Information Quality Act. At present,

none of the 10 national standards, or national standard guidelines, directly discuss or provide guidance on peer review processes.

NMFS is considering expanding NS2 to include specific language regarding peer review processes. NS2 appears to be the logical national standard to provide further guidance regarding peer reviews, since a peer review process is one method for ensuring that the best scientific information available is utilized in Council decisions. This language may include minimum criteria for peer review processes, based in part on the public comments received. Furthermore, there may be a need to clarify the relationship between the peer review processes that may be established by the Secretary and each Council and the role of the SSC of that Council vis-à-vis the peer review process.

Finally, NMFS seeks comments from the public on other issues or clarifications to NS2 that the public would like to see addressed in this rulemaking.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1851.

Dated: September 15, 2008.

Samuel D. Rauch III,
Deputy Assistant Administrator for
Regulatory Programs, National Marine
Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. E8-21837 Filed 9-17-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S



Accomplishments of the Alaska Region's Habitat Conservation Division in Fiscal Year 2008

Evans Island, Prince William Sound: photo courtesy of the Shorezone project

This report provides highlights of Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) activities from October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008. HCD carries out NOAA Fisheries' statutory responsibilities for habitat conservation in Alaska under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Federal Power Act, and other laws. HCD has two principal programs: identification and conservation of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) through fishery management, and environmental review of non-fishing activities to minimize impacts to EFH or other habitats for living marine resources. HCD also supports habitat restoration projects in conjunction with the NOAA Restoration Center.

HCD has staff located in the Alaska Regional Office in Juneau and a field office in Anchorage. HCD coordinates extensively with other groups to facilitate habitat conservation. Within NOAA such organizations include the Sustainable Fisheries Division and Protected Resources Division in the NOAA Fisheries Alaska Regional Office, the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, NOAA General Counsel, and the Invasive Species Program. HCD also works in close partnership with other agencies and organizations including the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minerals Management Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Alaska Invasive Species Working Group, and a variety of industry and conservation groups.

Essential Fish Habitat and Fishery Management

Arctic Fishery Management Plan

For the first time, a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) is being prepared for the Arctic. HCD staff played a key role by developing the description and identification of EFH based on available data regarding fish assemblages and habitat. The effort was challenging because the Arctic has not been well researched or sampled, and available information is dated or limited to small-scale investigations that do not reflect the entire range of target species. Further, the scale of the Arctic is enormous with no infrastructure to support marine fisheries or research. As a precautionary approach, the FMP will prohibit commercial fisheries in waters north of the Bering Strait until systematic sampling can establish stock densities and allow informed decisions about effects to habitat and other ecosystem components.

North Aleutian Basin Energy and Fisheries

HCD staff participated in a panel discussion on energy and fisheries issues in the North Aleutian Basin at a workshop hosted by Alaska Sea Grant. This effort was instrumental in preparing requests to the Minerals Management Service to study potential effects to fish and marine mammals from oil and gas developments. The Minerals Management Service has included the North Aleutian Basin in its five year plan for lease sales, generating concern about the potential effects to fisheries and marine mammals in the eastern Bering Sea and Bristol Bay.

Review and Revision of Essential Fish Habitat Components within Fishery Management Plans

HCD in cooperation with the Alaska Fisheries Science Center and North Pacific Fishery Management Council prepared a draft plan and schedule for the review and revision of the EFH components of the Council's FMPs. The plan includes a coordinated approach for updating EFH information within five years of the last revision, as called for in the national regulations implementing the EFH provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Alaska Region was the first in the nation to initiate such an approach.

Cold Water Corals

HCD staff served as an integral part of the NMFS Coral Team, which has been drafting plans to further deep sea coral protection and identification. Habitat-forming biota such as deep sea corals and sponges are sensitive to human activity and may take many years to recover from disturbance. Some managed fish and shellfish species use this habitat for protection and camouflage. Deep sea coral management continues to evolve within the Alaska Region.

Essential Fish Habitat Contract Closed Out

HCD approved the final invoice for a large multi-year contract for services related to preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement for EFH Identification and Conservation in Alaska. The contract was initiated in 2001 and amended several times. Most of the work was completed prior to publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement in 2005 but the contractors also provided assistance for the analysis of measures to protect Bering Sea habitats in 2006 and recently completed a final task related to the identification of EFH for the new Arctic FMP. HCD's careful oversight of the contract resulted in spending 99.78% of the obligated funds on analyses to support EFH management decisions.

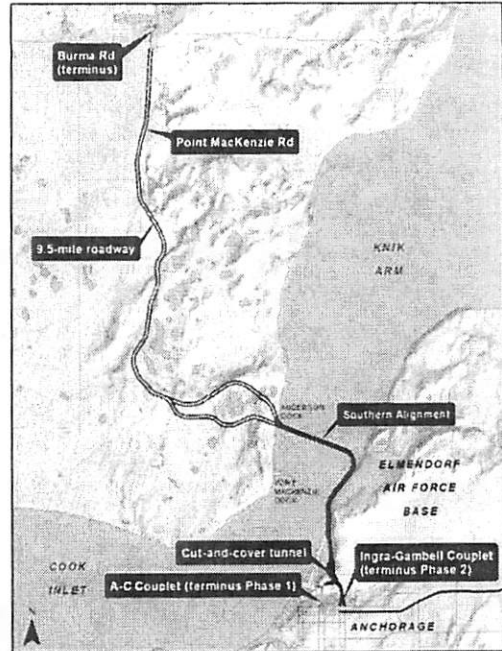
Other Fishery Management Actions

HCD staff advised and assisted staff from the Sustainable Fisheries Division regarding a number of other fishery management actions during FY08. HCD completed intra-agency EFH consultations on annual harvest specifications, fishery management plan amendments, and all other fishery management actions that would result in changes in fishing effort that may adversely affect EFH.

Environmental Review to Minimize Habitat Loss

Proposed Knik Arm Bridge

HCD worked with the Protected Resources Division to develop comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Knik Arm bridge in upper Cook Inlet. Studies requested by HCD have shown extensive use of the Knik Arm area by over 20 species of fish, including all five species of Alaska salmon. In 2003, the Alaska legislature established the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA) to undertake the permitting, design, financing, and construction and then to own, operate, and maintain the proposed bridge as a toll road. Preliminary capital costs are estimated to range from \$400 million to \$600 million. KABATA's preferred alternative entails solid fill approaches extending a total of over 5,000 feet into Knik Arm and leading to a pile-supported bridge 8,200 feet in length. NMFS recommended not proceeding with the expansion as proposed because that is the best option for recovery of Cook Inlet beluga whales and for sustaining upper Cook Inlet salmon runs. Alternatively, we recommended that KABATA investigate crossing designs which may include seasonal construction, reducing fill amounts, and greater free span distance.



GCI/Spandex Marine Cable Project.

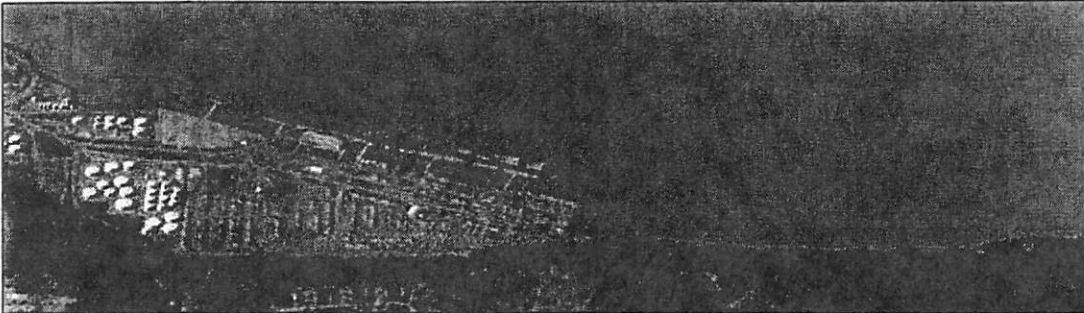
HCD staff coordinated with the project sponsors, the NOAA Fisheries Northwest Region, and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to assess the installation of a new fiber-optic telecommunications cable from Oregon to several landfalls in Alaska. The cable route transects nearshore areas important to groundfish and salmon, as well as offshore commercial fishing areas. HCD helped to ensure that the Council was notified and Council meetings were used to provide an arena for commercial fishermen to learn of the project and voice any concerns. HCD's early coordination and assistance were key to a transparent consultative process, leading the project sponsors to route the cables within existing, dedicated cable corridors and avoid laying cable through Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (the Alaska Seamount Habitat Protection Areas).

Chuitna Coal Project

HCD staff participated in the pre-application and scoping process for the Chuitna Coal project, a proposed surface coal mining and export project located in the Beluga Coal Field, approximately 45 miles west of Anchorage. The proposed project includes a surface coal mine and support facilities, mine access road, coal transport conveyor, personnel housing, air strip, and a coal export terminal that would include a 10,000-foot trestle constructed into Cook Inlet for loading ocean-going coal transport ships. HCD raised concerns regarding the hydrologic studies for the project. As a result, consulting hydrologists under direction of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) further investigated the study design and hydrologic models, concluding that the models being used would not accurately support an assumption of "no effect." EPA and the project proponents are now preparing an environmental impact statement, and HCD will continue to be involved.

Port of Anchorage

Over the past six years, HCD raised numerous issues and offered recommendations to minimize impacts to salmon habitat and beluga whales from the Port of Anchorage expansion project. The Corps of Engineers ultimately issued a permit for the project, allowing approximately 135 acres of intertidal and subtidal fill and 235 acres of dredging. NOAA Fisheries subsequently received a Freedom of Information Act request from a local environmental advocacy group, which used our detailed administrative record to petition the Corps to rescind the permit under the auspices of the Data Quality Act. The Corps has not yet responded. HCD staff continue to work to minimize the impacts of the project through compensatory mitigation. In particular, our efforts have focused on purchasing 60 acres of high value estuarine habitat (wetlands and uplands) at the mouth of Campbell Creek.



Port of Anchorage Prior to Expansion



Future Port of Anchorage Expansion

Pebble Mine

HCD staff continue to participate in the Pebble Technical Working Groups and steering committee for a vast mine development proposed in the Bristol Bay watershed. In recent letters to the Pebble Limited Partnership and the EPA, HCD expressed concerns that ongoing or planned studies for the project will be inadequate for analyzing potential impacts to Bristol Bay resources. Dialog with staff from other federal and state resource agencies revealed similar concerns. As a result HCD is attempting to bring together leadership at the various agencies to discuss ways to improve the value of ongoing technical analyses.

Nanwalek / Port Graham Airport Project

HCD staff coordinated with ADOT&PF and residents of the villages of Nanwalek and Port Graham on the Kenai Peninsula to reduce effects to marine habitat from planned airport improvements. The two villages are accessible only by water or air and their airports do not meet current Federal Aviation Administration standards. A reconnaissance study by the Alaska Department of Transportation identified several options for building a new shared airstrip. HCD staff was concerned that an alternative initially favored by the communities would include building a runway that extends into English Bay with

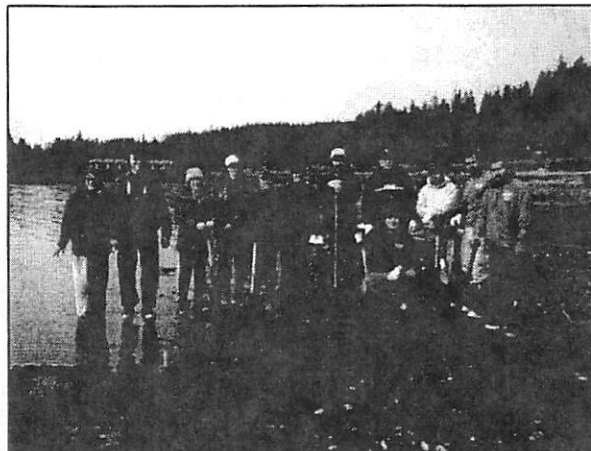
substantial subtidal fill and loss of productive marine habitat. As a result of early input from HCD, the villages and the Department of Transportation agreed to examine other alternatives in more detail to avoid or reduce environmental concerns.

Hydropower and Assessing the Impacts of Climate Change on Watersheds

HCD, in cooperation with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, began assessing whether recent precipitation and hydropower reservoir inflow anomalies in Southeast Alaska are within the normal range of variability over the observational record or whether they are evidence of a potential regime shift associated with climate change. The analysis will focus on Sitka's Blue Lake and Green Lake projects as the Blue Lake reservoir undergoes a license amendment to increase dam height and generating capacity. The study will discuss how natural variability on seasonal-to-decadal scales and longer-term climate change affect water resource management. Data sources will include information from the utilities about inflow and outflow in the reservoir, power generation, and reservoir management. The results of this study could be applied to other hydropower utilities in Southeast Alaska or used to provide general guidance to NMFS and other agencies when assessing measures to provide adequate flows to protect fish habitat below hydropower projects.

Auke Nu Cove Eelgrass Transplantation

Over the past few years HCD staff worked closely with the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) to develop mitigation to offset the environmental impacts of a new dock and float for commercial vessels in Auke Nu Cove. The project involves filling about five acres of productive intertidal habitat including eelgrass beds. The project footprint was redesigned to minimize the impact to intertidal resources and to avoid almost all eelgrass habitat. Permit conditions recommended by HCD required CBJ to transplant the last remaining eelgrass that they could not avoid filling. HCD helped by mobilizing volunteers from NMFS, CBJ, the Corps of Engineers, and Alaska Glacier Seafood Company to transplant the eelgrass. With the help of these volunteers, the transplantation was a success and destruction of these eelgrass plants was averted.



Residential Development in Wrangell

HCD's conservation recommendations led the Corps of Engineers to deny a permit to construct a workshop and home on intertidal fill in Wrangell. HCD's comments noted that the nearshore habitat in the project area is used by juvenile salmon, Pacific cod, walleye pollock, arrowtooth flounder, rockfish, and other species, and that less damaging alternatives were available. The result illustrates that such consultations can lead to protection of important fish habitats, especially when proposed development is not water dependent and alternatives are available.

Hyder Causeway Construction Project

HCD worked with the Alaska Department of Transportation and the Forest Service to provide guidance for the construction of a new access causeway in Hyder. The causeway replaced an existing trestle across a broad intertidal area to a boat and floatplane harbor. A major concern was the potential for blocking access to juvenile chum and coho salmon that rear in the tidal flats at the upper end of Portland Canal. With assistance from Alaska Fisheries Science Center staff, HCD persuaded the Department of Transportation to design suitable breaches in the causeway to facilitate salmon passage.

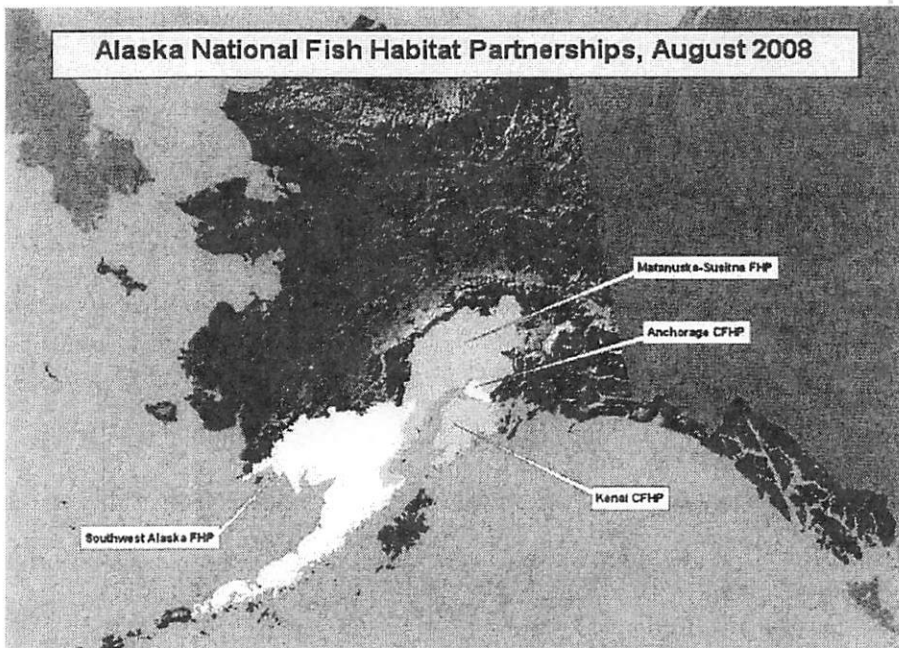
Sitka Airport Runway Safety Area Extensions

HCD staff worked with the Federal Aviation Administration on issues relating to a number of improvements to the Sitka Airport, including runway safety area extensions that would fill marine intertidal habitat. The preferred alternative was scaled back based on both economic constraints and environmental concerns promoted by HCD for herring spawning areas immediately adjacent to one end of the runway. HCD comments resulted in major changes to the Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and HCD staff continue to address outstanding issues of water quality and mitigation.

Habitat Restoration and Protection

National Fish Habitat Action Plan

Alaska has two recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan: the Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership (Mat-Su) and the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership. Alaska also has two candidate FHPs: Anchorage’s Salmon in the City and the Kenai Peninsula Conservation Partnership. HCD and Restoration Center staff work closely with these partnerships. HCD staff helped the Mat-Su finalize a strategic plan and develop a process to receive project proposals. Staff also helped the Southwest partnership write a proposal for conservation of land in



the Bristol Bay region. HCD is also working with the Kenai and Salmon in the City partnerships to develop strategic plans to submit to the National Fish Habitat Board for recognition as a full partnership. Additionally, HCD staff, as a partner in the Mat-Su FHP, received the Department of the Interior’s 2008 Cooperative Conservation Award for playing a key role in developing the partnership and its strategic plan.

Cooperative Habitat Protection Partnership

HCD was the recipient of one of the first pilot grants for a watershed planning effort for Little Campbell Creek in Anchorage in 2006. The funding for Project COHO (Community Outreach Habitat Operation) allowed HCD to partner with the municipal government to add fish habitat information to a new watershed plan that addresses habitat concerns in a broader context. HCD staff continued to see results this year when the Little Campbell Creek Watershed Plan was adopted by the Municipality of Anchorage’s Planning and Zoning Commission and then approved by the full Municipal Assembly in June 2008. The Watershed Plan describes the area’s resources, addresses social and environmental issues

that the watershed faces, and identifies implementation strategies that will assist and guide the Municipality in decision-making and permitting throughout the watershed.

Colter Creek Culvert Replacement Project

Four culverts occur on Colter Creek in Wasilla, severely constricting the creek and creating velocity barriers to juvenile salmon. Regional Restoration Center staff, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy, the Mat-Su Borough, US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, the Girl Scouts, and local landowners, are working to replace all four culverts with arched pipes. The restoration sites will be re-vegetated and monitored with the help of volunteers and incorporated into existing environmental education programs conducted by the Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District for local school children. The project will also be used to educate the public about fish passage. The Colter Creek Fish Passage Restoration Project will restore juvenile fish passage, improve stream function, and enhance fish habitat on Colter Creek. By the end of this project, there will be adequate fish passage and stream flow.

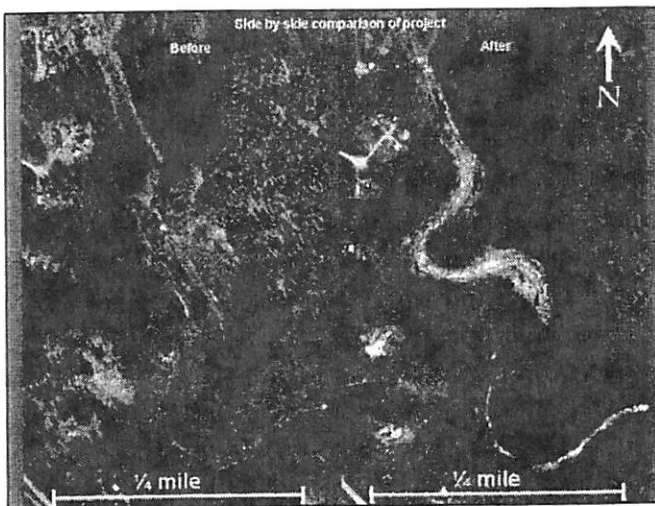


Montana Creek

Regional Restoration Center staff continued to work with a variety of partners to support the Juneau chapter of Trout Unlimited in completing a watershed planning document for Montana Creek. Partially funded by NOAA, the watershed planning document provides the City and Borough of Juneau with an overview of the value of the Montana Creek watershed to local residents and an outline of management recommendations to ensure the sustainability of fish habitat and recreational and educational opportunities. The document promotes comprehensive and durable land use designations within the watershed to maintain the fishery and recreational values of Montana Creek.

Moose Creek

Regional Restoration Center staff continued to work with the Chickaloon Village Tribal Council on a

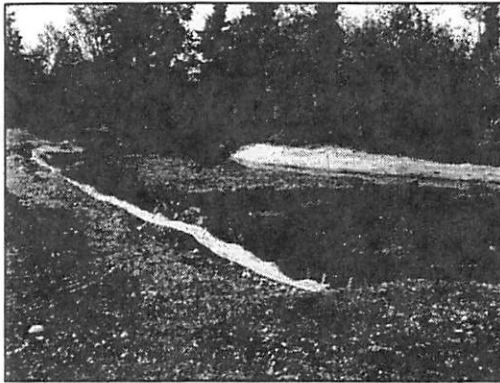


restoration project to re-established fish passage and physical and biological function of the Moose Creek stream channel and adjacent floodplain, lost when the stream was re-routed at several locations in the early 1900s to facilitate construction of a railroad line for transporting coal. Channel alignment changes and related impacts resulted in formation of three distinct waterfalls and a significant loss of in-stream aquatic habitat. Once the restoration work is complete, access to over 10 miles of the upper watershed and access to a wetland complex north of Wishbone Hill will be re-established.

Little Campbell Creek Fish Alcove

In 2006, with a grant from the Great Land Trust, NOAA, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Anchorage Waterways Council undertook a habitat restoration and enhancement project along Little Campbell Creek. In 2007, ground was broken for the Little Campbell Creek Fish Alcove project, native vegetation was planted, and the alcove was constructed. On July 24, 2008, the alcove was connected to Little Campbell Creek. Regional Restoration Center staff follow-up in the summer and fall indicated that the project is functioning as a fish refuge, as well as providing habitat for several other wildlife species. See the following link for media coverage of the project.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1il6quGVfbQ&eurl=http://anchoragecreeks.org/pages/littlecampbellcreek_projects.php



June 2007



July 2008

Chester Creek

HCD staff worked with a large number of partners on a restoration project to improve a stream channel to the Chester Creek estuary in Anchorage and design a new culvert with natural substrate that will be placed under the railroad. The new culvert will replace a long culvert with no stream channel and a steep outfall to the lagoon, and will increase opportunities for fish to reside in the mixing zone between fresh and saline waters during upstream and downstream migrations. To give project managers a before and after restoration comparison, NOAA Fisheries and the At-Sea Processors Association are funding a video monitoring project to compare conditions before and after the project.

Outreach and Education

Salmon in the City

HCD participated in the Salmon in the City Festival together with the Municipality of Anchorage, other federal and state agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The festival is a two week event centered on the theme of "Celebrating our Creeks, Community and Culture." HCD staff participated in the opening day events with activities and information on salmon habitat protection and restoration projects in the community.

One NOAA

HCD staff took the lead in NOAA Fisheries partnering with NOAA's National Weather Service at the 2008 Alaska State Fair to share a booth and reach out to the public. Together, NOAA employees provided a consistent message about NOAA products and services. NOAA staff increased public awareness in areas involving fishery management, habitat conservation, endangered species, marine mammals, tsunami and earthquake hazards, lightning safety, NOAA weather radio, marine and aviation products and services, and flood preparedness.



Other Noteworthy Activities

Exemplary Ecosystems Award

In July, 2008, the Lynn Canal Artificial Reef Project received an Exemplary Ecosystems Award from the Federal Highway Administration. HCD staff were instrumental in implementing this project, which constructed two artificial reefs composed of granite boulders at Yankee Cove in Lynn Canal near Juneau. The award, presented to the Alaska Department of Transportation, identifies exemplary ecosystem and habitat projects that are unique or highly unusual in their (a) geographic scope; (b) use of cutting edge science or technology; (c) high level of environmental standards; (d) high quality of results achieved; and/or (e) recognition by environmental interests as being particularly valuable or noteworthy.

Shorezone Mapping

HCD staff continued to work in partnership with other agencies and organizations to image and map habitat features along sections of the Alaska coastline. Work completed this year includes 4,905 km of physical mapping data; 5,472 km of biological mapping data; and 3,118 km of new shoreline imagery in southeast Alaska (70 km in the Icy Cape Area, 2,085 km in the Wrangell area, and 963 km in the northern Admiralty Island area). Partners imaged an additional 1,144 km in the Petersburg area and 565 km in the northern Admiralty Island area. The imaging was collected by a contractor with funds from NOAA Fisheries and other partners. The imagery and mapping data are accessible via an interactive website (www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/maps/szintro.htm) to provide coastal habitat information to decision makers and the public.

Invasive Species Coordination

HCD staff continued to lead the Marine Subcommittee of the Alaska Invasive Species Working Group to great success. As a follow up to training HCD facilitated in 2007, green crab and tunicate monitoring were established in Gustavus, Ketchikan and Sitka, and tunicate monitoring was initiated by the Alaska ferry system and expanded to Sitka. HCD staff used NOAA invasive species program funding to produce a green crab awareness poster, support monitoring in the field with equipment and mounted green crab specimens, and contract for the preparation of a *Spartina* response plan. HCD staff also worked with a contractor to test a green crab habitat suitability model using actual green crab occurrences in Vancouver, Canada. HCD was also instrumental in working with partners to develop an Alaska green

crab response plan. HCD staff presented on green crab and tunicate monitoring at a National Invasive Species Council meeting in Anchorage. HCD staff also provided extensive information and recommendations that were included in the Alaska Governor's Report on Climate Change and contributed to draft legislation for a bill to be introduced to the Alaska legislature to form a state Invasive Species Council. Through these and many other efforts of coordination and cooperation this past year, NOAA Fisheries is regarded as a leader in marine invasive species efforts in Alaska.



Green crab sampling from a float plane in Security Cove
photo by Gary Freitag.



Green crab sampling in Glacier Bay
photo by Whitney Rapp

Coastal America

HCD continued to represent NOAA Fisheries in Coastal America, a national interagency partnership coordinated by the White House Council on Environmental Quality that promotes efforts to conserve and restore coastal habitats. HCD co-chaired the Coastal America Alaska Regional Implementation Team and collaborated with a variety of partners to implement a variety of worthy projects, including those that receive funding from the NOAA Restoration Center and the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (which is overseen by NOAA Fisheries).

Marine Debris Workshop

Regional Restoration Center staff received an internal NOAA grant to hold a workshop on marine debris in Alaska. The workshop held in conjunction with the 2008 Alaska Forum on the Environment, was organized jointly with staff from the Protected Resources Division and presented information on funding and coordination opportunities from the NOAA Restoration Center. Regional criteria for prioritizing cleanups in Alaska were also developed.

Please visit our website:
www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/habitat