Chester Creek Video Monitoring and Habitat Restoration

Salmon returning to Chester Creek in Anchorage, Alaska will get their five minutes of fame via the Chester Creek Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project video monitoring program conducted by Alaska Pacific University and Anchorage Waterways Council. Starting in summer 2008, salmon are being video taped as they attempt to pass from Westchester Lagoon, a recreational resource for the Municipality of Anchorage, to Chester Creek estuary via an outfall. The video will document the number of successful and unsuccessful fish passages through the current structure. Limited numbers of adult coho salmon have made it through the outfall at favorable tides, but many others have been unable to navigate the steep outfall and grating.

This 5.5 million restoration project will create a stream channel to the estuary, and a new culvert with natural substrate will be placed under the railroad. The new culvert will replace a long culvert with no stream channel and the steep outfall to the lagoon, increasing opportunities for fish to reside in the mixing zone between fresh and saline waters during upstream and downstream migrations.

Underground utilities, including force sewer mains and petroleum pipelines, are currently being relocated, and design for the new stream channel is complete. Stream channel and culvert construction is slated for fall 2008.

To give project managers a before and after restoration comparison, the video monitoring will resume in 2009 when the Chester Creek Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project is complete.

NOAA Fisheries and the At-Sea Processors Association are funding the restoration project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is providing expertise and instruction on fish passage monitoring.

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