

# The Fisheries Program



Fisheries  
& Habitat  
Conservation

*For 133 years, the U.S.*

*Fish and Wildlife Service's*

*Fisheries Program has*

*worked with partners to*

*recover, restore, and*

*maintain self-sustaining*

*populations of fish and*

*other aquatic species,*

*while enhancing fishing*

*opportunities for the*

*American people.*



USFWS Photo

**Federal stewardship of the nation's fishery and aquatic resources has been a prime responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries Program for the past 133 years. The Fisheries Program is composed of two principal components: the Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Program and the National Fish Hatchery System.**

The Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Program uses on-the-ground capabilities and technical expertise to conserve and restore fish and wildlife populations. Management activities include habitat and population assessments critical for resource planning, restoration and management; providing expertise and leadership in the development of resource plans; protecting native populations from the threats of aquatic nuisance species; restoring degraded habitats and opening up fish passage.

The National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) has a unique responsibility in helping to recover species listed under the Endangered Species Act, restoring native aquatic populations, mitigating for fisheries lost as a result of federal water projects, and providing fish to benefit State and Tribal programs.

The Fisheries Program leads the Service's efforts to fulfill Tribal trust responsibilities

by providing technical assistance and expertise, training Tribal members in the propagation and management of fish and wildlife resources, consulting with Tribes regarding fish and wildlife resources for which the Service is responsible, and helping to restore and maintain subsistence fishing.

## **AQUATIC SPECIES CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT**

The Fisheries Program is a key contributor to accelerating the recovery of listed, candidate, and depleted aquatic species. The National Fish Hatchery System produces healthy and genetically appropriate animals and plants to re-establish wild populations, conducts critical research on fish and aquatic species disease and prevention, provides refugia for endangered and imperiled species, and develops and shares new culture techniques. Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance helps to reverse declines in fish populations by developing and implementing restoration and recovery strategies, assessing the status of remnant stocks, implementing invasive species prevention and control measures, evaluating population responses to stocking and habitat restoration, managing subsistence fishery harvest on Federal lands in Alaska, conducting genetic population assessments and engaging in public outreach and education activities.

## AQUATIC HABITAT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Fisheries Program has expanded its habitat conservation and management activities to restore aquatic habitats throughout the United States. Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance assesses habitat conditions, identifies fish habitat needs, controls or manages aquatic nuisance species, removes or bypasses artificial barriers and monitors the results. The National Fish Hatchery System works closely with other Service biologists and with the States, Tribes, and the private sector to complement habitat restoration and other resource management strategies for maintaining healthy ecosystems that support healthy fisheries, and to monitor fish health through the National Wild Fish Health Survey.

## COOPERATION WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

The Fisheries Program has a long history of providing technical guidance and support to Tribes, managing more than 55 million acres of some of the most important aquatic and terrestrial habitats on and off reservations. Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance provides support in planning, assessments, management of aquatic resources for subsistence, habitat restoration and conservation enforcement training programs. The National Fish Hatchery System produces fish for Tribal subsistence programs and to help re-establish and maintain native fish populations on Tribal lands, as well as providing training in fish culture techniques and genetics.



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## LEADERSHIP IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

All Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance and National Fish Hatchery System offices help to develop and incorporate sound science and innovative technology for mitigation, restoration, and recovery of aquatic species and their habitats, and for evaluating population responses to conservation actions. Seven Fish Technology Centers and nine Fish



Zebra mussels are but one invasive species that contributes to degradation of native species and their habitats. USFWS Photo.

Health Centers provide special leadership to advance the state-of-the-art in fisheries conservation tools needed to solve on-the-ground hatchery and fishery management problems that make restoration, recovery and mitigation programs possible. Contributions in genetic analyses, nutrition, population dynamics, cryopreservation, biometrics, culture technologies, disease diagnostics and new approved drugs have approved the quality and relevance of both hatchery production programs and broader fisheries management activities. Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance uses state-of-the-art scientific techniques to structure and implement monitoring and evaluation studies critical to determine successful management actions.

## RECREATIONAL AND SUBSISTENCE FISHING AND PUBLIC USE

The Fisheries Program plays an important role in helping the public use this important resource. Restoration of depleted populations of native game fish, through stocking by the National Fish Hatchery System, provides and enhances recreational fishing opportunities for the Nation's 35 million anglers age 16 and older. The Alaska Fisheries Subsistence Management program manages subsistence fisheries harvest by rural Alaskans on 237 million acres of Federal lands, encompassing 66 percent of Alaska lands and 52 percent of Alaska's rivers and lakes. These activities recognize and promote the value of responsible recreational and subsistence use of fisheries and help States, Tribes and other partners.

In accordance with Federal law, Service policy has been established to pursue mitigation actions for losses of fish, wildlife, and their habitats from Federal water development projects. Mitigation fisheries provided by the Service are highly valued by the Nation's anglers and are extremely valuable to state and local economics, in many cases generating more than \$100 in economic effects for each budget dollar spent. In the Southeast and in the Rocky Mountains, this equates to approximately \$200 million annually in direct expenditures on recreational fishing activities, which help maintain more than 5,500 jobs.

The Service is ready to seize the opportunity to make a real difference conserving American's fisheries. By aligning the program with the priorities of our partners, the Service and its Fisheries Program are poised to build on 133 years of conserving America's fisheries by addressing the challenges and opportunities facing our fish and their habitats well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



USFWS Photo



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**For more information about the Fisheries Program, contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries and Habitat Conservation at 202/208-6394 or visit us on the Internet at <http://fisheries.fws.gov/>.**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
800/344-WILD  
<http://www.fws.gov>**

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