U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fisheries and Habitat Conservation

Celebrating Habitat in Alaska

Environmental Contaminants staff on scene of the *Selendang Ayu* oil spill (December 2004). USFWS photo.

Project planning divers prepare a transect to assess effects of development on nearshore habitats. USFWS photo.

A Service biologist releases a recaptured Selawik River sheefish. USFWS photo.

- **The Partners Program** completed 80 riparian, wetland, and instream restoration and assessment projects, improving more than 50 miles of aquatic habitat.
- **The Coastal Program** worked with 30 public and private partners on projects to protect or restore more than 40,000 acres of coastal fish and wildlife habitats.
- **The Fish Passage Program** and its partners removed 26 barriers, opening more than 100 stream miles of historic spawning and rearing habitat for five species of salmon, trout, and char.
- **The Invasive Species Program** assisted the State of Alaska in development of its Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan, provided information to nearly 2,000 registered sport fishing guides, continued to fund on-going ballast water research, assisted Ted Stevens International Airport in efforts to limit the risk aquatic weeds present to human health and aviation safety on Lake Hood, and initiated an independent study of the risks posed from colonization of farm-raised Atlantic salmon to Alaska's native wild salmon.
- **The Environmental Contaminants Program** is leading the ongoing Service response to the December 8, 2004 grounding of the freighter *M/V Selendang Ayu* on Unalaska Island. This spill has impacted resources managed by all Service programs including oiling of refuge lands, marine mammals, listed species, fisheries, and migratory birds.
- In partnership with State and Federal trustees, the Environmental Contaminants program's Natural Resource Damage Assessment of the *M/V Kuroshima* oil spill resulted in a $653,000 settlement. Restoration projects included removing nonnative foxes from a 9,000 acre island used by ground nesting waterbirds, seabirds, and shorebirds. Similar fox removal projects in the Aleutians have resulted in a 2 to 5-fold bird population increases.
- Environmental Contaminants partnered with the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge to cleanup more than 7,300 gallons of fuel abandoned in drums in a remote marsh. Use of local hires provided jobs in the local community, and recovered fuel was used in village households.
- In 2004, the Environmental Contaminants program conducted investigations of lead shot and chronic oiling in listed sea ducks, contaminant concentrations in polar bears, and amphibian abnormalities.
- **The Project Planning Program** conducted approximately 1,800 pre-development consultations in support of permits and licenses for federal, state, local government, Native organization, and private sector projects.
- The Juneau Fish and Wildlife Field office identified important habitat to protect as Old Growth Reserves and studied effects of forest management on birds, fish, and mammals on the 17-million acre Tongass National Forest.
- The Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office, with assistance from the Selawik Tribal Council and Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, conducted mark-recapture

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USFWS photo

studies that estimated the size of the Selawik River spawning population of sheefish, a primary component of subsistence diets, to be over 20,000 fish.

- Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office Project Planning worked closely with the Bureau of Land Management in preparation of two major environmental review documents related to oil and gas leasing in the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska (NPRA), identifying more than 3 million acres of biologically sensitive habitats for migratory birds, polar bears, and other trust species. Fairbanks staff also initiated a cooperative research effort on the potential effects of elevated predator populations on tundra-nesting birds on the North Slope.

- Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office Project Planning worked closely with the State of Alaska on its proposed 5 million acre on- and offshore Alaska Peninsula/ Bristol Bay Oil and Gas Lease Sale. This coordination provided the State with wide-ranging data and formulated recommendations to accomplish the sale while protecting critical fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

- **Outreach:** Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office staff made 175 visits to elementary schools and other community events, working with more than 1200 youth and adults to promote stewardship of Alaska's fishery resources.

- **Innovation:** The Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office used digital video technology to monitor salmon and steelhead populations and estimate the number of anglers and scenic boaters on the Upper Kenai River, within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

- How many resident fish are there in Becharof Lake, Alaska's second largest lake? In partnership with University researchers, that's the question the King Salmon Fish and Wildlife Field Office is answering using sophisticated sonar equipment.

For further information, contact the FWS Regional Ecological Service Office, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK, 907.786.3542 or visit http://alaska.fws.gov.