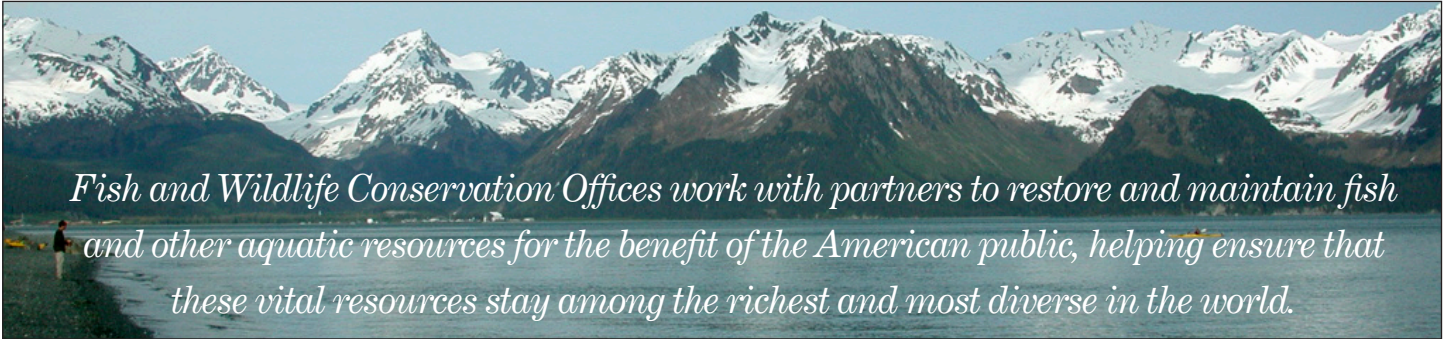




## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Fisheries and Habitat Conservation

# Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices



*Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices work with partners to restore and maintain fish and other aquatic resources for the benefit of the American public, helping ensure that these vital resources stay among the richest and most diverse in the world.*

From the cold, clear streams of Alaska's Matanuska-Susitna Basin to arid Death Valley springs and the humid wetlands of the Florida Everglades, America's aquatic resources are a unique and valuable treasure. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices (FWCOs) work with private organizations, public institutions, and citizens to preserve and restore these important assets. The FWCOs ensure the continuing ecological, recreational, subsistence, and commercial health of America's fisheries resources.

The quality of America's aquatic resources is threatened by a variety of stresses, including invasive species, habitat loss, and climate change. Almost 400 aquatic species either have or need protection. Using the best available science, FWCOs work across geographic and political borders to help craft partnerships and solutions to conserve, restore, and enhance our natural resources for the benefit of the American people.



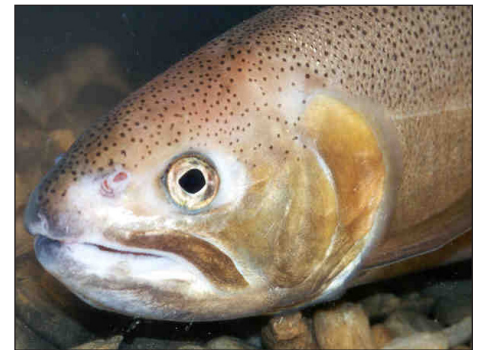
Striped bass

The FWCO program has 65 field offices across 32 States, with over 300 biologists and other experts committed to aquatic resource conservation. With its partners, the program has facilitated recovery efforts that have reversed declines in numerous important aquatic species. The program is proud to have played critical roles in the recovery of striped bass and the Gila trout. These success stories demonstrate the value of cooperative approaches to fisheries management.

### PRINCIPLES

- Voluntary projects and collaborative action
- Focus on conservation outcomes
- Stewardship through science and local knowledge
- Coordination across agencies and landscapes
- Leveraging resources — doing what we do best to help partners do their best
- Application of the best appropriate scientific conservation and management tools

Conservationists and fisheries managers look to FWCOs to achieve aquatic resource restoration goals, knowing that healthy ecosystems provide increased hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching opportunities. These recreational pastimes translate into real economic benefits for communities, supported by responsible and effective management of our Nation's fish and wildlife resources.



Gila trout

### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Lead the planning, restoration, and management of fisheries and their habitats
- Apply scientific data to focus conservation activities on high-priority species and watersheds
- Restore aquatic habitats (instream and wetland) and restore fish passage, including activities under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and National Fish Passage Program
- Provide critical information to partners on the condition of habitat and populations of fish and other aquatic species
- Work collaboratively with partners to improve status and condition of interjurisdictional fisheries
- Fulfill Federal trust responsibilities to Native American Tribes by working with them to conserve and manage fish and wildlife resources on Tribal lands
- Supervise subsistence use by rural Alaskans on federal lands





Lake trout

## FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION OFFICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2008, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices worked on **over 400** threatened and endangered species projects; completed **3,243** population assessments; removed **94** barriers and reopened **28,751** acres and **641** stream miles to fish passage; conducted **1,249** habitat assessments of **231,400** wetland acres, **515,392** upland acres, and **9,392** in-stream miles; and restored **64.7** in-stream miles, **65.6** riparian miles, and **63.6** upland acres. With our partners, we will continue to build on past successes and maintain our position at the cutting edge of aquatic habitat and species conservation. Current successes include:

Program biologists are working with partners to develop a conceptual framework for assessing all U.S. aquatic habitats. The assessment will yield a national report on the condition of aquatic habitats and support an online system for setting strategic priorities through the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

In 2008, the Service funded 63 projects in 28 states under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The Service contributed \$2.4 million, with an expected partner match exceeding \$6.9 million. Partners include federal, tribal, state, local, university, and private organizations. One funded project restores a 1.5 mile long riparian corridor in Stony Creek, VA for the threatened candy darter, which is an endemic species found only in West Virginia and Virginia.



Candy darter

In 2008, FWCO biologists reintroduced Apache trout into two streams, restored 9 miles of important habitat, and mechanically removed non-native trout from 4 streams. Self-sustaining Apache trout populations now exist in 21 streams, comprising over 140 miles of historic habitat. The Apache trout is on the verge of becoming the first federally threatened fish to be delisted as a result of recovery efforts.

The M/V Spencer F. Baird was commissioned in the Great Lakes in 2006 to help restore depleted native trout populations in the Great Lakes, which were nearly wiped out due to invasion of sea lampreys, overfishing, and pollution. This one-of-a-kind 95-foot vessel was specially made to stock lake trout and evaluate their performance. It also assesses other species, such as yellow perch, helping meet the information and research needs of the Service and its partners, contributing to the Great Lakes ecosystem and economy.



Greater sage grouse

Continuing a project initiated in 2006, the Lander, WY FWCO is monitoring the survival and movements of radio-collared greater sage grouse on the Wind River Reservation in 2008. Greater sage-grouse are culturally important to Shoshone and Arapaho tribal members and habitat loss is the key threat to sage-grouse survival. The data from this study are being used to assess population parameters and seasonal use of habitat ranges.

Program staff in Alaska are sampling adult Chinook salmon in the Tuluksak River as part of a three year study that began in 2007 to estimate the heritability of adult size, growth rate, and age in a wild Chinook salmon population. Determining these life history characteristics will provide fishery managers with a better understanding of the possible impacts of a size selective harvest on Chinook salmon.

## FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION OFFICE BUDGET

FY2007 Enacted	FY2008 Enacted	FY2009 Continuing Resolution
\$46.789M	\$55.114M	\$55.114M

The Fisheries Program budget aligns closely with its Strategic Plan to increase transparency and aid in tracking accomplishments. The FWCO budget is derived from two subactivities:

(1) Maintenance and Equipment, and, (2) Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation.

- In FY 2008, the National Fish Passage Program received a one-time \$6 million increase to help implement the Administration's Open Rivers Initiative. The increase will result in an additional 90 barriers removed or bypassed and 600 miles and 6,000 acres opened for access to fish passage.
- In FY 2008, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan budget increased by \$2.25 million. The increase is being used to strategically implement priority on-the-ground habitat conservation and restoration projects and effectively manage priority trust aquatic species and their habitats.
- In FY 2009, the reduction in funding from the FY 2008 enacted level will offset funding for higher priority initiatives in the President's budget. The Service will continue to pursue FWCO goals using existing funds by working with states, tribes, and partners, and seeking alternative funding sources.



M/V Spencer F. Baird

**Wildlife Conservation Offices, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Fisheries and Habitat Conservation at (202) 208-6394 or visit <http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/fwco/>**

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

**Fall 2008**