

# Water Quality



## Fisheries & Habitat Conservation

*Our mission is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.*

### THE NATION'S WATERS PROVIDE INVALUABLE BIOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The Nation's fish and other aquatic resources are among the richest and most diverse in the world. The recreational, commercial, and subsistence opportunities these resources provide have helped support the Nation's growth by providing enormous ecological, social, and economic benefits.

For example, according to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, recreational fishing contributed over \$36 billion to the American economy in 2001.

### THE STATUS OF THE NATION'S AQUATIC SYSTEMS

Despite efforts by the Service and others to conserve the Nation's aquatic resources, a growing number of aquatic species are declining at alarming rates. More than 400 aquatic species either have, or need, special protection in some part of their natural or historic range. Several fish species are important recreational, subsistence, and commercial species, including several species or populations of salmon, sturgeon, and trout.

The reasons for these declines are linked largely to habitat loss, pollution, watershed modifications, sedimentation, and the impacts of harmful exotic or transplanted species.

### PROTECTING THE NATION'S WATERS FOR THE FUTURE

The objective of the Clean Water Act is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters. Achieving this important objective requires the cooperation of States, Tribes, Federal and local governments, the private sector, and the public.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Environmental Contaminants Branch works closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other entities in providing our expertise in evaluating how water pollutants affect fish and wildlife and their habitats. Such information is critical for developing effective water quality standards that ensure protection of these valued resources and the watersheds that support them.

However, sustaining this capability nationwide is a daunting task. Currently the Environmental Contaminants Branch is

refocusing its efforts to enhance its capabilities for the benefit of the Nation's waters and the American people.

The Environmental Contaminants Branch will continue to work with its partners to:

- *Protect* the health of aquatic habitats
- *Restore* fish and other aquatic resources
- Provide opportunities to *enjoy* the benefits of healthy aquatic resources.

### CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION

The Service remains committed to its role as a partner in conserving America's aquatic resources. The Environmental Contaminants Branch will rely on its unique and essential resources and capabilities, recognizing that sound science and solid partnerships will continue to be the key to aquatic resource stewardship. The Environmental Contaminants Branch is committed to protect the integrity of our Nation's waters. With your support, you can help us achieve this important goal.



Recreational fishing. USFWS Photo

For more information about Water Quality, 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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A brown bear catching salmon. USFWS Photo

