

# The Fisheries Program



*For more than 130 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.*



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**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 is the national leader in many aspects of fish culture and broodstock management, especially for imperiled species. The Hatchery System also works with partners to support Federal mitigation programs, which restore fish populations affected by the construction of dams.

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

by providing technical assistance and expertises, training Tribal members in the 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 Hatchery System's primary role is the production of healthy and genetically appropriate animals and plants to re-establish wild populations. Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance helps 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 Fish Hatchery System contributes to habitat conservation efforts through habitat restoration by providing “explorer” or “research” fish to help determine habitat requirements of imperiled species, and the National Wild Fish Health Survey monitors fish health.

## 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 Hatchery System produces fish for Tribal subsistence programs and to help re-establish and maintain native fish populations on Tribal lands.



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## Leadership in Science and Technology

All Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance and National Fish Hatchery offices use and help develop sound science and innovative technology for the 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 Health Centers provide special leadership to advance the state-of-the-art in fisheries conservation tools needed to solve on the



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ground hatchery and fishery management problems that make restoration, recovery and mitigation programs possible. Contributions in genetic analyses, 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 Hatchery System, provides and enhances recreational fishing opportunities for the Nation’s 58 million anglers. 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.

When Federal locks and dams were built, Congress directed that the Hatchery System help mitigate the impact of those projects on recreational, commercial and Tribal fisheries. The Hatchery System’s production for mitigation in the Southeast and in the Rocky Mountains generates an estimated \$200 million annually in direct expenditures on recreational fishing activities and helps 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 130 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.



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