QUALITY FISHING WATERS

Identification - Protection - Classification

Need or Problem

A quality fishing area in Southeastern Alaska may be defined as a watershed of outstanding natural aesthetic beauty in a wilderness setting with fishing characteristics that add up to an exceptional angling experience. We feel that in any diversified management program that some quality fishing waters need to be identified, protected and classified because:

The future need for "quality fishing" recreational areas in S.E. Alaska.

Many sport fishermen come to Alaska for its quality fishing. As more of our land becomes developed and population and tourism increases the need for quality fishing areas will increase.

(2) Logging is rapidly increasing and encroaching on quality fishing areas.

The type of logging in S.E. Alaska considerably reduces the aesthetics of a watershed. Since aesthetics underlie the total concept of a quality

fishing area, and future projections indicate a need for more quality fishing areas, it is imperative that these areas should be reserved from logging.

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(3) The native wild fish populations should be maintained in some watersheds for future generations to enjoy.

Many anglers desire fishing for wild fish which are often more sporting to catch and of better quality than hatchery catchables. Automobile access, via a planned interisland highway, to some quality fishing areas may result in heavy fishing pressure. Many of our native fish populations in these quality fishing waters could not be maintained in areas of extensive angler utilization. The following information on sea-run cutthroat trout will illustrate this:

- a. Slow growth rate--it takes a sea-run cutthroat six to seven years to reach ten to thirteen inches and sexual maturity. In other words, the fish are not quickly or easily replenished once overfishing occurs.
- b. Low maturity composition--only about 50 percent of a cutthroat population entering a stream or lake from the sea will spawn the following spring. The remainder are nonspawners which will not mature until a following year. These fish will be subjected to angling for more than one year prior to reaching maturity; hence, heavy fishing pressure could easily reduce the number of spawners below the level necessary to maintain a native population.

c. Low numbers of fish-our better sea-run cutthroat waters may have populations numbering only about 1,000 fish. With only about 50 percent of these fish classed as spawners, the spawning populations may number only 500. A stream supporting an adult population of this magnitude could support only a limited number of man-days of effort each year.

(4) Some watersheds should be kept in a pristine condition for future study.

Some quality fishing areas could be used for experimental fish management such as evaluation of the usefullness of fly fishing only regulations or a catch and release fishery. Also these areas may provide a basis for measuring changes due to certain types of development.

(5) The genetic integrity of fish in the wild state should be maintained in some watersheds.

Retaining a gene pool, unpolluted by hatchery fish, in its original state may become extremely important to the future management of some species of native fish. This could be accomplished by establishing a roadless natural area and strict fish management practices.

Background

In 1972, the S.E. Alaska Sport Fish Staff listed a number of waters which were considered to have outstanding sport fish values. From this listing we se-

lected 18 watersheds which we felt should be kept in their natural state free from logging, roads and development. This select list was then submitted to the U.S. Forest Service in March and April of 1972 with a request that they be studied for possible classification as dispersed recreation areas (Federal Regulation U-3(a) or experimental and Natural Areas (Federal Regulation U-4). To date none of these waters have been studied or classified.

The following waters (Figure) were submitted to the U.S. Forest Service in 1972 for possible study and classification:

Chatham District

Yakutat: Situk River Watershed- This system contains the five species of Pacific salmon in addition to the finest known population of spring and fall run of steelhead in Alaska. The run of anadromous Dolly Varden is outstanding. The lakes offer resident rainbow angling. The watershed provides trophy moose and brown bear hunting and photography. Mink, otter and beaver are also present for viewing. The river also provides an opportunity for float trips by canoe or raft. Three recreational cabins and two public access points allow for ample public usage. The Department of Fish and Game is presently working in conjunction with U.S.F.S. to provide additional rearing area for salmon and steelhead in this watershed.

Juneau: Turner Lake Area - This 2900 acre lake is readily available to Juneau anglers. The lake has an excellent population of cutthroat

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trout plus Kokanee and Dolly Varden. A 1/2 mile trail at the lake outlet leads to saltwater where anadromous species are reported available. The scenic value of the lake is outstanding. Bears and mountain goats are often observed at the lake shore. There are two recreational cabins with boats on the lake.

Admiralty Island: Kanalku Lake - This is one of three lakes on Admiralty Island that is accessible to anadromous fish. Department of Fish and Game studies have shown that these lakes are vital to over-wintering populations of char. Kanalku Lake supports an excellent population of cutthroat trout, silver salmon, Kokanee, and a distinct population of red salmon. These fish exhibit a much smaller size than the normal red salmon. It is believed this distinct stock is the result of smaller fish being able to successfully pass a partial barrier in the lake outlet. This partial barrier also creates an excellent feeding area for brown bears during the salmon runs. There are several excellent vantage points for observing and photographing the bears at the falls.

Sitka District

Chichagof Island: Goulding Lakes and River - This is one of the finest cutthroat systems in the Sitka District. The drainage is comprised of four lakes with a total surface area in excess of 2000 acres. A recreation cabin was constructed on the third lake (Otter) in the system in 1964. In addition to the fishing, the area is also noted for excellent deer hunting. The scenic value is well known as the



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entire west coast of Chichagof Island has been recommended for recreational consideration by conservation organizations.

Baranof Island: Lake Eva - This system contains the largest known population of "over-wintering" Dolly Varden. This is one of three bays in the 50 miles of Peril Straits that has not yet experienced logging activity. In addition to Dolly Varden, the system supports all species of salmon except king. Cutthroat and steelhead trout are available. The watershed has been the location of intensive fishery research by the ADF&G and has also been utilized to film a television documentary. A large cabin is located on the outlet. and a boat is available at the lake.

> Red Bluff and Gut Bays - These two bays are located midway on the east shore of Baranof Island. They both offer excellent anchorage, socione, part # champer exceptional fishing and unsurpassed scenic beauty. roke past societate

Port Banks-Plotnikof-Rezanof Systems - This area offers the finest silver salmon sport fishing in Southeast Alaska. The only known run of summer steelhead also occurs here. The lakes offer exceptional rainbow fishing with fish in excess of 20 inches available. There are four U.S.F.S. recreational cabins in the area.

Petersburg District

Kupreanof Island: Castle River - Offers all types of recreation to sportsmen of the Petersburg area. There is excellent fishing for cutthroat, silver salmon, Dolly Varden and steelhead trout. The deer and waterfowl hunting is outstanding. A U.S.F.S. cabin is available for public use. Kupreanof Island: Duncan Canal Salt Chuck - This area will soon be accessible from the new Kake-Petersburg Highway. It provides excellent cutthroat and silver salmon fishing. It is a fine waterfowl and deer hunting area. There are three U.S.F.S. recreation cabins in this area.

Kupreanof Island: Petersburg Creek - This single watershed provides the finest recreational opportunities close to a population center in Southeast Alaska. There is something here for everyone from the flower lover to hiker to hooter hunter.

Kuiu Island: Kadake Creek - This is one of the few outstanding cutthroat systems in the forest. Steelhead and coho are also available in good numbers. There is waterfowl hunting on the flats and deer hunting in the woods. A U.S.F.S. recreation cabin is available for public use.

Wrangell District

Bradfield Canal: Anan Creek - This creek possesses an outstanding run of salmon. These fish attract bears in abundance. The watershed is closed to bear hunting and observation stations are built along the creek. All 5 species of Pacific salmon spawn in this system. In addition steelhead and Dolly Varden are available to the recreational angler. Two recreation cabins are available to the public.

Kasaan District

Prince of Wales: Sweetwater-Thorn River Canoe system - U.S.F.S. has data.

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Prince of Wales: Sarkar Lake System - This watershed offers the identical situation that the Sweetwater system does.

Prince of Wales: Salmon Lake-Karta River - This is one of the finest recreation areas available to the Ketchikan population center. The system contains pink, chum, coho and red salmon as well at cutthroat, rainbow-steelhead trout and Dolly Varden char. It is one of the few systems with steel head available during the fall and winter. There are three U.S.F.S. recreation cabins on this watershed.

Revillagigedo Island: Naha River Drainage - There are six major lakes in this system that offer unlimited recreation potential. Fish populations consist of all salmon except kings, fall-winter and spring run steelhead, rainbow, cutthroat, Dolly Varden and grayling. Deer, bear and waterfowl, including the rare Trumpter swan are found in the area. The system is readily available to Ketchikan and may soon be connected by road. It's high recreation value is attested to by the placement of six U.S.F.S. recreation cabins in the watershed.

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These are lakes and streams that were in the original listing prepared by the staff. They offer excellent recreation opportunities but were felt to not contain the unique character associated with the other systems.

Chatham Distirct

Yakutat: Italio River- Square Lake - East River - Doan River.

Admiralty Island: Youngs Lake - Lake Kathleen - Lake Florence - Jims Lake -Pleasant Bay Creek and Lake - Pybus Bay Creeks - Gambier Bay Creeks - King Salmon Creek - Windfall Creek - North and South Arm Hood Bay Creeks.

Sitka District

Chichagof Island: Black River - Kook Lake - Sitkoh Creek - Sulioa Lake -Pavlof Harbor.

Baranof Island: Lake Baranof - Redoubt Lake - Deer Lake.

Kruzof Island: Surprise Lake.

Petersburg District

Kuiu Island: Alex Lake and Creek.

Kupreanof Island: Towers Lake - Kah Sheets Lake and Creek.

Mitkof Island: Blind Slough - Ideal Cove Lakes.

Wrangell District

Etolin Island: Kunk Lake and Creek - Snake Creek (Olive Cove).

Wrangell Island: Thoms Lake and Creek.

Mainland: Virginia Lake and Creek, Martin Lake and Creek - Eagle River drainage.

Kasaan District

Prince of Wales Island: Red Bay Lake - Salmon Bay Lake - Kegan Lake System -Dickman Bay System - Niblack System - Miller Lake System.

Craig District

Prince of Wales: Staney Creek - Black Bear Lake - Josephine Lake - Klawak Lake and Creek - Eek Lake - Hetta Lake - Klakas System. Dall Island: Essowah System.

Ketchikan District

Revillagigedo Island: Ward Cove System - Ella Lake - Manzanita Lake - Low Lake - Orchard Lake.

Mainland: Humpback Lake - Hugh Smith Lake - Bakewell Lake - Unuk River - Lake Reflection - Lake McDonald - Helm Bay System.

Solution

It is becoming increasingly evident that the U.S. Forest Service is not going to take any action on our request to study these waters for possible classification. Therefore, the S.E. Sport Fish staff should take the initiative to compile the necessary information and make an official Department submittal to the chief of Forest Service requesting, on an individual basis, that certain watersheds be classified as dispersed recreation areas or experimental and natural areas. The steps needed to accomplish this are:

(1) Continue to identify, modify, add or delete waters from the list. We feel the majority of the outstanding fishing waters in S.E. Alaska are known. However, not all waters have been catalogued and many surveys are insufficient hence, some could have been missed and This should be done on a time available basis and usually incidental to other duties.

Identification of new quality fishing waters should be done by management, Catalogue and Inventory and the land-use study personnel.

(2) Keep up to date on all proposed logging areas by frequent contacts with Forest Service Personnel. This is the responsibility of the Land-use study personnel.

- (3) Establish priorities of study for the areas listed. Areas proposed for logging would usually have priority.
- (4) Gather information needed to justify a proposal to the U.S.Forest Service for classification.

This is the responsibility of the Catalogue and Inventory and management staff. Should contact Game Division and Commercial Fish Division for added information.

(5) Write the proposal -

Certain staff members with a special concern or expertise on an area may be assigned to write individual proposals. Also some may be written by the Habitat Coordinator. All will be reviewed by the Habitat Coordinator before submittal to Headquarters.

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** refer to Forest Service Handout on "Alternatives for the Tongass."

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NOTE: Underlined systems are considered ineligible for classification as Wilderness or Roadless areas because of current land status.