

PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: Alaska

GRANT NO.: F-10-33

GRANT TITLE: Sport Fish Investigations in Alaska

PERIOD COVERED: July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

STUDY NO. AND TITLE: H-01 Aquatic Resources Coordination

STUDY OBJECTIVES:

Objectives of this project were as follows.

1. Collect and analyze biologic, hydrologic, and other information required to define instream flow/water volumes and aquatic habitat needed to sustain sport fish populations;
2. Complete and submit water right applications to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) for reservations of water for the protection of sport fishery resources and waterway access to sport fishing opportunities;
3. Review plans for pending and future water development and uses under state, local and federal laws, and identify, recommend, and defend prescriptions needed to avoid and mitigate projected negative impacts to aquatic and riparian habitats that sustain sport fishery resources and waterway access to sport fishing opportunities;
4. Negotiate final flow regimes for reservation of water certificates with ADNR and for other permits and protection mechanisms with responsible regulatory agencies;
5. Evaluate existing and future water rights for protecting sport fish production and waterway access to sport fishing opportunities;
6. Review and prepare comments on the technical validity and adequacy of study designs and results/conclusions of fishery and aquatic habitat studies performed to assess instream flows/water volumes to sustain sport fish production and waterway access to sport fishing opportunities; and
7. Review and prepare comments on local, state and federal laws, regulations, and policies on their adequacy for protection of aquatic and riparian habitats and maintenance of instream flows/water volumes to sustain sport fish populations.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION:

Objective 1. Streamgages were operated by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and contracted with U.S. Geological Service (USGS) on several water bodies throughout the state to describe seasonal and long-term flow characteristics needed to define instream flow needs for prioritized sport fisheries. Streamgages operated by ADF&G included: Windfall Creek, Eva Lake and Freshwater Creek in Southeast and Chester Creek and Little Susitna in Southcentral Alaska. ADF&G also provided partial funding to USGS for the Little Willow streamgage. Staff installed 4 discharge measurement stations on Nushagak River tributaries (Klutuk, Lower Klutuk, Koklong and Koggiling Creeks), 3 discharge measurement stations in Matanuska River

tributaries (Granite Creek, Kings River, and Chickaloon River) and 11 discharge measurement stations in the Deshka-Kroto Creek watershed area.

Work is ongoing to compile, reduce, and analyze hydrologic and biologic data to file reservations of water applications on water bodies with sufficient streamgauge data. Biological data for reservations is obtained from ADF&G area biologists and other biologists that have site-specific knowledge.

Staff participated in the Alaska Clean Water Actions (ACWA) program, an inter-agency program with Alaska's 3 resource agencies to provide stewardship of Alaska's waters in a holistic manner. Aquatic habitat information was compiled, reviewed and evaluated to develop stewardship actions for water bodies at risk or in need of recovery. Streams that receive a sufficient ranking are included for potential stewardship actions through grant opportunities.

Objective 2. ADF&G prepared and submitted 28 water right applications to ADNR for reservations of water to protect sport fishery resources and waterway access to sport fishing opportunities. Efforts continued to work collaboratively with ADNR to complete reservation of water applications and reduce the backlog of pending applications as agreed upon in a 2002 Memorandum of Agreement between ADF&G and ADNR.

Objective 3: Work on this objective primarily focused on water developments associated with hydropower generation and resource development. Approximately 30 traditional hydropower and hydrokinetic projects were monitored. Coordination between other planning and permitting programs related to protection of sport fisheries were also performed under this objective by Aquatic Resources Unit staff. This effort overlapped with Objectives 1 and 2.

Submittal of hydropower and other water development project comments and recommendations to protect sport fisheries were completed through technical reviews, analyses, and oversight of planned and existing developments. Comments were submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), project applicants and other federal and state agencies as appropriate.

Objective 4:

ADF&G negotiated and were granted 11 reservation-of-water certificates from ADNR protecting 474 miles of fish habitat. Tasks performed with adjudicating these applications included negotiating final flow agreements, giving public notice, addressing public comments, writing a Finding of Fact and Conclusion of Law, and issuance of a water right certificate for the reservation. Flow regimes to protect sport fisheries and waterway access to these resources were also evaluated and negotiated for FERC hydropower proceedings as well as technical assistance provided for other aquatic habitat measures submitted for Unit staff review.

Objective 5: This effort has not received much focus due to limited staffing and other higher-objective priorities. It is possible a special project will be needed to obtain specialized resources and personnel to be able to place greater emphasis on this objective.

Objective 6: Water development projects with the potential to impact sport fish production or water access to sport fishing opportunities were reviewed on the validity and adequacy of study designs throughout the state. These included water right permits for water development projects and various temporary water use permits that may affect long-term and seasonal flow characteristics. Technical assistance was provided for instream flow support to department staff and the public.

Objective 7: Staff participated in instream flow, hydropower, aquatic resources and other related discussions relating to fish habitat protection. Staff provided comments to FERC regarding review of existing licensing processes. Staff met with ADNR to discuss existing levels of instream flow protection and identify areas where additional efforts are needed.

FINAL REPORT STATUS: This performance report constitutes the final report of activities for study H-01 for the grant period.

An annual ADF&G Special Publications report entitled "Instream Flow Protection in Alaska, 2017", describing the program, issues, and accomplishments has been published and available online at:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/SP18-10.pdf>

PREPARED BY: Joe Klein

DATE: August 15, 2018