

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alaska Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

2012-2016 Strategic Plan



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM

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Front Cover: SAGA Alaska Corps crew members plant red alder trees on the banks of Pullen Creek in Skagway, Alaska.

Back Cover: Government Hill Elementary Schoolyard Habitat. The project was made possible through a partnership between the school community and the Alaska PFW Program. Other key partners/supporters included ADFG, Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, Corvus Design, Evergreen Nursery/J.L. Properties, Anchorage Park Foundation, Municipality of Anchorage, and the Alaska Division of Forestry. Photo by K.Mueller

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Regional Overview	2
Alaska Resources and Habitat Types.....	2
Resource Issues: Threats & Challenges.....	4
Conservation Delivery Opportunities for Alaska PFW Program.....	5
GOAL 1: Conserve Habitat - Cooperative Conservation on Private Lands	6
<i>Goal 1 Objectives</i>	6
<i>Key Strategic Activities</i>	6
<i>Performance Measures</i>	9
<i>Five-Year Habitat Conservation Targets by Geographic Focus Area</i>	9
<i>Geographical Focus Areas</i>	10
<i>Cook Inlet Basin</i>	10
<i>Anchorage Bowl</i>	10
<i>Matanuska-Susitna Valley</i>	11
<i>Kenai Peninsula</i>	12
<i>Greater Fairbanks Area (Tanana Valley Watershed)</i>	14
<i>Nome Watersheds</i>	15
<i>Southeast Alaska</i>	15
GOAL 2: Broaden and Strengthen Partnerships	16
<i>Goal 2 Objectives</i>	16
<i>Key Strategic Activities</i>	16
<i>Performance Measures</i>	16
GOAL 3: Improve Information-Sharing and Communication	17
<i>Goal 3 Objectives</i>	17
<i>Key Strategic Activities</i>	17
<i>Performance Measures</i>	17
GOAL 4: Enhance our Workforce	19
<i>Regional Objectives</i>	19
<i>Key Strategic Activities</i>	19
<i>Performance Measures</i>	20
GOAL 5: Increase Accountability	21
<i>Goal 5 Objective</i>	21
<i>Key Strategic Activities</i>	21
<i>Performance Measures</i>	21
Stakeholder Involvement	22
<i>The Strategic Planning Process</i>	22
<i>Summary of Stakeholder Input</i>	22
<i>Selected Agencies and Organizations Directly and Indirectly Contributing to Strategic Plan Development</i>	23
Appendix A: Selected Species Benefiting from Alaska PFW Program Activities	24

Executive Summary

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program provides technical and financial assistance to create, restore or enhance riparian, wetland, or aquatic habitats on private lands for the benefit of fish, migratory birds, other wildlife and the public. In Alaska, the PFW Program works in partnership with private landowners, non-governmental organizations, local governments, state agencies and Alaska Native entities to identify and inventory habitat conservation and improvement opportunities, assess habitat conditions, and design and implement on-the-ground habitat conservation projects. These activities help to sustain the economic and community benefits associated with healthy populations of fish and wildlife. Consistent with national guidance, the primary goals of the PFW Program in Alaska are to:

1. Conserve fish and wildlife habitat.
2. Broaden and strengthen conservation partnerships.
3. Improve information-sharing and communication.
4. Enhance program workforce.
5. Strengthen program accountability.

The PFW Program was established in Alaska in 1995 with an initial allocation of \$60,000. This allowed the Service to support eight stream bank restoration projects on the Kenai River and one fish passage improvement project on Ophir Creek, near Yakutat. Today, the Alaska PFW Program allocation is \$1.8 million and program biologists are located in four Fish and Wildlife Field Offices (Anchorage, Kenai, Fairbanks and Juneau). A program coordinator is located in the Alaska Regional Office in Anchorage.

Negative impacts associated with development along stream corridors has long been recognized as a habitat concern in Alaska, setting the stage for the Alaska PFW Program's early focus on streambank restoration. A 1994 study conducted by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) demonstrated that 12 percent of Chinook salmon rearing habitat along the Kenai River had been destroyed. ADFG was then pioneering the development of riparian habitat restoration techniques in Alaska, and had substantial financial resources from Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Settlement Funds and other sources available for Kenai River efforts. ADFG, however, had no administrative mechanism for funding projects on private lands.

This confluence of interests and opportunities led to the formation of a very successful partnership between the Service and ADFG, whereby ADFG transferred funds to the Service to enter into financial assistance agreements with private landowners to restore habitat (for public benefit) on their lands. To date, more than 400 projects have been undertaken on the Kenai River alone, most with technical and financial assistance from both agencies. This cost-share agreement between the Alaska PFW Program, ADFG, and private landowners is now being replicated in other parts of the state.

In addition to riparian habitat restoration, improving fish passage on private lands is another important priority for the Alaska PFW Program. This work complements the Service's Fish Passage Program, which addresses larger and more complex fish passage concerns on both private and public lands. Over the past several years, ADFG, the Service, Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and others have completed an inventory of thousands of partial or complete fish passage barriers.

A popular fishing spot at the confluence of the Kenai and Russian Rivers. Katrina Mueller / USFWS



These barriers are often associated with traditional road culverts that are simply designed to pass water under the road — not provide fish passage or maintain natural stream processes. While standards to address stream crossings and culvert designs are beginning to better accommodate fish passage in new road construction, the existing legacy of road crossing structures designed without fish passage or natural stream functions in mind will take decades to remedy. Removal of fish passage barriers is cost-effective, particularly in Alaska’s otherwise largely intact waterways, where individual barrier removals can restore access to dozens of miles of productive rearing or spawning habitat.

Central to achieving PFW goals and associated strategic actions is working with partners and other Service programs to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify and assess habitats for species of concern.
2. Form partnerships and identify funding sources to support habitat conservation projects.
3. Implement voluntary conservation actions to restore priority habitats and track results.

4. Enhance and sustain workforce expertise in ecology, geomorphology, planning, project management, habitat assessments and other skills needed to accomplish program goals.

The elements of this plan and subsequent execution of strategic actions is guided by the following considerations:

1. Does the action significantly benefit Service trust species and their habitats?
2. Does it support the needs of our priority partners and complement the goals of existing partnerships?
3. Will the action lead to new partnerships, strengthen relationships with existing partners, or increase partner capacity to help the Service meet its mission?
4. Does the action leverage additional funds and in-kind support?
5. Does the action strengthen private landowner stewardship of fish and wildlife habitat?

Going forward, the design and implementation of habitat conservation and restoration projects in Alaska will increasingly use the combined capacity of the Service’s primary Conservation Partnership Programs (PFW, Fish Passage, and Coastal), as well as the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) and associated Alaska-based FHPs.

Coordination between these programs and partnerships ensures efficient use of public and private funds to complete projects and provides program staff with the flexibility to leverage resources and undertake projects on virtually any land base. This integrated approach also allows the Service to more easily address habitat issues at a watershed scale, coordinate the delivery of conservation partnership programs with the strategic plans of the Alaska FHPs, and incorporate climate change and other information provided by Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC).

*Coyote Creek, Mat-Su Valley:
Two perched round culverts were replaced with this larger fish-friendly structure that allows fish free passage while maintaining natural stream functions.* Bill Rice / USFWS



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Regional Overview

Alaska's Resources and Habitat Types

The State of Alaska is one fifth the size of the contiguous United States. The state's landscape is dominated by a diverse coastlines, extensive wetlands, vast tracts of northern boreal forest, tundra, and broad glacial valleys rimmed by mountain ranges.

The state has over 12,000 rivers, three million lakes greater than five acres, and contains almost two-thirds of the total wetland acreage in the U.S. Wetlands in Alaska generally include bogs, muskegs, wet and moist tundra, fens, marshes, swamps, salt marshes, floodplain wetlands, and wetlands in deltas of large river systems such as the Yukon, Kuskokwim, Copper, and Stikine. Alaska is dominated by palustrine vegetated wetlands; shrub and herbaceous bogs are conspicuous features of the landscape in Southcentral and Southeast Alaska.

Alaska's coastline exceeds 45,000 miles — more than 50% of the nation's total. Alaska's diverse coastal habitats range from steep, rocky coasts and fjords to mudflats, eelgrass lagoons, and large, river valleys. Deepwater habitats include lakes, bays, sounds, and inlets.

Together, these habitats contribute substantially to the health of fish and wildlife populations and provide numerous ecosystem services that benefit the Alaska's residents, visitors, and economy. The rich mosaic of Alaska's wetlands, uplands, and coastal habitats are recognized as nationally and internationally significant.

Alaska is home to millions of waterfowl, seabirds, and shorebirds, thousands of miles of streams that support anadromous and resident fish, and hundreds of thousands of marine mammals.



Great Grey Owl. Winter Osborne

Over half of the state's surface area is deemed suitable waterfowl habitat. Upwards of 10-12 million ducks, one million geese, and 120,000 swans are a part of annual waterfowl migrations to and from Alaska. Alaska hosts fish and wildlife species that are shared by Canada, Mexico, Russia, Japan and other countries. Five of the 58 sites designated in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network are located in Alaska.

Five species of Pacific salmon and a number of other anadromous species migrate among Alaska's marine and freshwaters and provide substantial economic benefit to the state, local communities, and other species. In the Bristol Bay region alone, more than 100 million sockeye salmon return each year to spawn.

Wetland habitat with Denali in the background. K. Mueller / USFWS

Regional Overview

No group of species is more important to sustaining the state's vibrant subsistence culture and economy than salmon. Recent economic studies underscore this point. For example, commercial and recreational fishing support over 40,000 total jobs in Alaska jobs and over \$1 billion of total income to Alaska workers (UA/ISER 2001).

A more recent study commissioned by Trout Unlimited (and using data from 2007) found that the total economic output from commercial, sport and subsistence salmon and trout fisheries is an estimated \$986 million in Southeast Alaska.

This same study found a significant amount of jobs are directly linked to salmon and trout — over 7,000 jobs were directly or indirectly linked to the fisheries or hatchery operations.

Three fishing sectors — commercial, sport, and subsistence/personal — accounted for an estimated 10.8 percent of regional employment in Southeast Alaska.

In 2009, the University of Alaska Institute for Social and Economic Research published its report analyzing the economic importance of sportfishing in the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough:

- In 2007, resident and nonresident anglers fished almost 300,000 days.
- Anglers spent anywhere between \$63 million and \$163 million in the Borough on goods and services primarily used for sport fishing.

- Alaska residents spent an average of between \$126 and \$517 per angler day, while nonresidents spent an average of between \$344 and \$602.
- After accounting for multiplier effects, this spending generated between 900 and 1,900 jobs and between \$31 million and \$64 million of personal income for people who work in the Borough.
- Sport fishing activity in the Mat-Su generated between \$6 million and \$15 million in state and local taxes.

Dolly Varden char. Togiak National Wildlife Refuge / USFWS



Resource Issues: Threats & Challenges

Alaska's landscape may appear virtually pristine to the casual observer. However, fish, wildlife, and their habitats face many of the same issues and threats challenging the rest of the United States.

Alaska's fish and wildlife resources are vulnerable to both natural and human impacts.

Earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis can radically alter coastal habitat and wetlands habitats in a single event. Resource extraction and urbanization have historically impacted fish and wildlife habitats in Alaska and pose a significant potential threat to currently intact habitats. As communities grow and industries (e.g., mining) expand, land development for new roads, buildings, and other urban and industrial infrastructure will threaten habitats and ecosystems that benefit humans and wildlife alike on both private and public lands. Development of infrastructure and public services to support tourism, one of the fastest growing industries in the state, can also have direct and indirect adverse impacts of fish and wildlife habitat.

While visitors and residents enjoy the state's fish and wildlife resources and the economic benefits they provide, increased access can result in habitat degradation, and the introduction and spread of invasive species. When poorly planned or managed, urbanization, tourism, and the state's resource-based economy can pose a threat to Alaska's fish, wildlife, land, and water resources.

In addition to the near-term threats associated with development, these habitats and the associated ecosystem goods and services they provide are vulnerable to climate change. Neglecting to restore and conserve these habitats in Alaska today may prove to be a costly oversight from an economic, community, and fish and wildlife management perspective. Communities across the country are spending significant resources to restore coastal estuaries, upland and riparian habitat, and wetland functions. By implementing proactive community-supported habitat restoration projects, the Alaska PFW Program safeguards important habitats for the present and future benefit of fish, wildlife, and the American public.



*The introduction and spread of nonnative invasive species – such as submersed aquatic plants in the genus *Elodea* (above) – is becoming an increasing problem in Alaska. Invasives can out-compete native species, alter coastal and inland habitats, and be difficult (if not impossible) to eradicate.*

Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District



Streambanks and riparian habitats can be impacted at high-use recreation areas.

David Wigglesworth / USFWS

Conservation Delivery Opportunities for Alaska PFW Program

The PFW Program is the Service's primary tool to provide technical and financial assistance to create, restore or enhance upland, riparian, wetland, or aquatic habitats on private lands. The PFW Program is one component of the Service's overall Conservation Partnerships initiative that, in Alaska, also includes the Coastal Program, National Fish Passage Program (NFPP), and NFHP. Each has unique capabilities and together create an effective toolbox for cooperative conservation delivery.

In Alaska, the Service manages its combined Habitat Conservation Partnership programs under a single Assistant Regional Director, creating significantly greater programmatic and administrative efficiencies. This structure enables these programs to be managed seamlessly and allows for cost effective conservation outcomes delivered through our field offices. Approximately 70% of the annual Alaska PFW Program allocation is used to fund projects. The remaining 30% is used to support the Service staff that provide technical assistance to partners and assist with project design, planning, and implementation.

The Alaska PFW Program has established an effective conservation delivery framework. The framework is built on the following key components:

- **Targeted Geographical Focus Areas:** Conserve key habitats within the strategic geographic framework outlined in identified focus areas.
- **Voluntary Conservation Partnerships:** Implement projects through cooperative agreements with community-based non-federal partners.
- **Technical Assistance:** Service staff bring expertise to and hands-on involvement in all habitat conservation projects.



USFWS

An interpretive kiosk/shelter built by Eagle Scouts to provide information about local fish and wildlife habitat. Part of a larger project to restore a homestead that had become a weed patch and caused local drainage problems. The private landowner agreed to restore the habitat and provide public trails. The tract will serve as an outdoor classroom for local elementary schools.

- **Cross-Program and Interagency Coordination:** Coordinate with FHPs and other Service programs (including CPA, Fisheries, Refuges, and LCCs) to identify, prioritize, and execute habitat conservation projects.
- **Leverage Program Resources:** Enhance the reach of PFW funds by identifying projects that also meet the goals and objectives of other federal, state, local, and private habitat conservation funders.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Provide training and access to technical resources to maintain staff competencies and support them in regionally-relevant conservation leadership roles.

The Alaska PFW Program brings a high degree of technical expertise and on-the-ground staff commitment to conservation projects that is unique among state and federal habitat restoration programs in Alaska. Program biologists are based in four Fish and Wildlife Field Offices (FWFOs) strategically located throughout the

state. The Alaska PFW Program benefits from well established, long-term working relationships with a variety of partners.

In contrast to grant programs that provide little assistance beyond financial support, our PFW staff take an active role in all aspects of project development, implementation and post-project monitoring. PFW staff and partners work together to identify opportunities, develop project goals and objectives, and prioritize, implement, and monitor projects.

We believe that the expertise and professional background of program staff combined with the local knowledge and community connections of our partners results in more efficient and effective delivery of program resources and, ultimately, greater project success and positive impact for Alaska's native fish and wildlife and public enjoyment and use of these resources.

Examples of recent PFW successes in Alaska can be viewed on the Region's website at: <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/restoration/>

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat

Cooperative conservation on private lands

Habitat loss is a leading threat to the sustainability of native fish and wildlife in North America, including Alaska. To address these threats, each year the Alaska PFW Program supports a variety of habitat conservation and education projects to provide for healthy self-sustaining fish and wildlife populations in Alaska.

The Alaska PFW Program will continue to examine its actions and decisions through the lens of climate change. Especially, it will work to incorporate new climate change findings and the anticipated impacts of climate change into its conservation delivery activities. Program strategies to respond to climate change and other threats to trust species habitats include implementing projects to increase habitat connectivity, riparian vegetation protection and restoration, and other actions that minimize current threats and increase habitat resiliency to climate change.

Goal 1 Objective

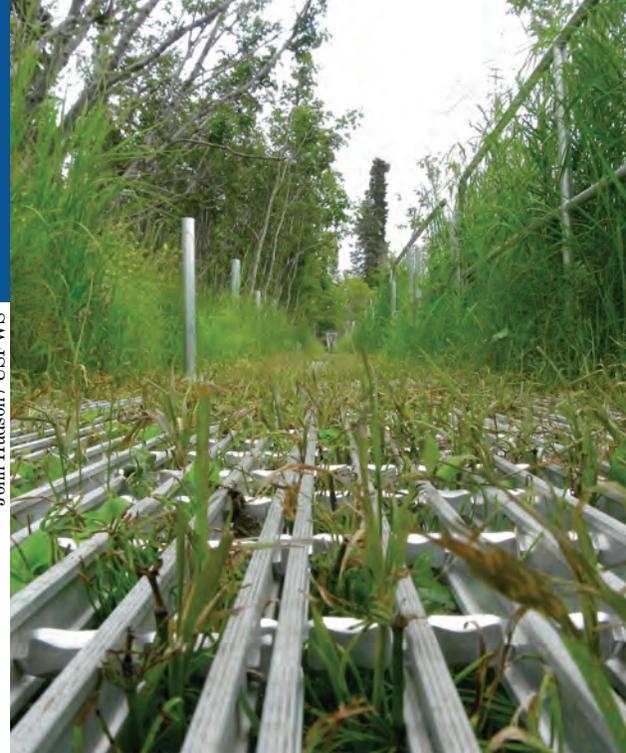
Work with private landowners, the State of Alaska, Alaska Native entities, non-governmental organizations, and communities on a voluntary basis to improve habitat on private lands for the benefit of fish, wildlife, and people.

Key Strategic Activities

1. Restore stream channels and stream banks.

Intact riparian plant communities reduce stream bank erosion, provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife, and buffer the effects of urbanization on aquatic health. When native stream bank vegetation is removed or destroyed, these important functions are lost. Each year the Alaska PFW program supports projects that protect or restore the integrity of stream banks to benefit aquatic and riparian species. Streambank restoration projects on private lands are conducted in partnership with ADFG, municipalities, schools, watershed councils, and others.

John Hudson / USFWS



Light-penetrating boardwalks allow native plants to grow while providing safe public access.

Restoration of natural stream channels and function are also an important part of the PFW Program. Although most of Alaska's streams have not yet been significantly impacted by development, some landowners have straightened or channelized creeks, significantly impacting habitats supporting anadromous fish and habitat complexity. Working with municipalities, boroughs, and private landowners, and others, these impacts can be minimized and habitat restored.

Native willow species are typically planted on exposed banks to improve bank stability and provide habitat. Spruce trees are cabled to banks to protect them from the erosive forces of flowing water. Other stream bank improvement projects include replacing riprap revetments with native vegetation. Light-penetrating gratewalks are often used to provide angler access while maintaining and protecting bank vegetation.

Teeland Middle School River Rangers restoring the streambanks of Cottonwood Creek in Wasilla in partnership with the Service, ADFG, Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, and others.

Katrina Mueller / USFWS



Goal 1: Conserve Habitat

2. Implement water quality improvements.

Rain gardens and other low impact development techniques help to reduce stormwater runoff and maintain or improve water quality. Clean water is necessary for sustaining salmon and other native fish species. These projects also provide excellent outreach opportunities for myriad stakeholder groups including schools, community organizations, and private sector land owners.

John Hudson / USFWS



Rain Gardens

A partnership between the Service and the Municipality of Anchorage has supported the design and construction of rain gardens (see example below) in public spaces and on school, commercial, and residential properties throughout the Municipality. Since 2008, 88 gardens totaling approximately 11,380 square feet have been installed, with the capacity to detain over 5,690 cubic feet of stormwater runoff (42,564 gallons) during a single rain event. Approximately \$50,000 in incentives have been matched three times over with contributions by participating landowners. In partnership with the Service, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough has begun to develop a similar program for managing stormwater while creating wildlife habitat.



Municipality of Anchorage

3. Promote community stewardship and schoolyard habitats.

Fostering the next generation of conservationists is an important component of the PFW Program. To this end, Schoolyard Habitats are improvements to schoolgrounds or nearby lands that makes them more hospitable for native species and more accessible to children to learn about and connect with nature on a daily basis. The Schoolyard Habitat Program is dynamic: projects can be planned through multiple phases, with new students building upon past students' work. Schools are encouraged to engage their students in brainstorming ideas for habitat features that foster learning and provide habitat for native fish and wildlife. Students accomplish on-the-ground restoration while participating in experiential outdoor learning opportunities.

Connecting People to Nature in an Urban Setting

Pullen Creek in Skagway (above) is a small spring-fed salmon stream flowing through the heart of this small Alaskan community and popular tourist destination. Since 2004 the PFW Program has collaborated with the Taiya Inlet Watershed Council to improve fish and wildlife habitat on this urban stream. Fish passage barriers have been removed and stream banks planted with native trees and shrubs to provide food and cover for fish and riparian dependent species. These and several other habitat restoration projects will be showcased along a new interpretive trail planned for the stream. With assistance from the Partners Program and with additional funding leveraged from the municipality, the TIWC and Service staff have spearheaded a conceptual trail design to be completed in spring 2012. Additional support from the PFW Program and municipality in 2012 will transform the conceptual plan into construction designs as well as support grant writing to fund trail construction. Once completed, the pedestrian trail will be accessible to more than 900,000 people visiting Skagway each summer on cruise ships. Trail users will learn about the cultural, historical, and natural history of Pullen Creek as well as the role of habitat restoration in improving stream conditions for salmon and other species.

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat

4. Help prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.

Hundreds of non-native invasive species have been intentionally or accidentally introduced into Alaska. Due to their aggressiveness, invasives often displace native species or degrade their habitat. Left unchecked, invasive plants threaten the integrity and productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems important to native fish and wildlife, humans, and the economy in Alaska. PFW Program invasive species management activities in Alaska include:

- Implementing projects that lead to better understanding of the presence and distributions of invasives within program focus areas.
- Collaborating with Cooperative Weed Management Areas to develop and implement species-specific early detection, prevention, control, and eradication strategies for priority invasions.
- Partnering with others to increase invasive species awareness among local residents and visitors (e.g., via “Weed Smackdown” events).

5. Remove fish passage barriers.

Culverts channel streams under the roads (from private driveways to major highways) that we travel on every day. Until recently, culverts were often placed in streams without consideration for maintaining the conditions that allow debris, sediment, and water to pass through unimpeded. These oversights commonly result in hanging (perched) outfalls and excessive or insufficient stream velocities that prevent or delay fish from accessing key habitats. The PFW Program invests funding and staff time in support of partnerships and projects that restore fish passage and habitat connectivity. Project funds are used to inventory, assess, and prioritize sites; remove fish passage barriers; and conduct post-project monitoring.



Awareness is the first defense against invasive species. The annual Anchorage Weed Smackdown (one of several in Alaska) currently targets non-native European bird cherry along Chester Creek's riparian corridor. These community events generate awareness and help manage the spread of invasives. K. Mueller / USFWS



Fish-friendly culverts are designed to retain the stream's natural conditions throughout. K. Mueller / USFWS

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat

Performance Measures

Performance Measures describe our annual accomplishments as reported by the Service's Habitat Information Tracking System (HabITS). HabITS tracks and reports accomplishment information at national, regional, and field office levels. At the national level, performance measures chosen include habitat restoration outcomes that can be quantified, such as wetland acres or linear length of stream miles restored, enhanced, or established. Field and Regional Office staff enter performance measure data throughout the year, which is used by the Washington Office in end-of-year reporting and outreach.

Other important components of annual performance measures include habitat assessment, survey and design, project/permit coordination, program/policy coordination, landowner consultation, outreach, and grant writing.

Table 1: 5 year targets (goals) by geographic focus area.

(5 YEAR TARGETS) Geographical Focus Area	Wetlands	Uplands	Riparian Zone/Stream		
	acres restored	acres protected	miles improved	stream miles made accessible	barriers removed
Anchorage Bowl	10	100	1.25	1	5
Fairbanks	20	200	12	4	3
Kenai Peninsula	25	10	3	1	5
Mat-Su Valley	5	50	0.75	6	15
Nome Watersheds	10	10	5	3	2
Southeast Alaska	8	20	2	2	3

5-Year Habitat Conservation Targets by Geographic Focus Area

Priority conservation targets for the Alaska PFW Program currently quantified through annual performance tracking include:

- acres of wetlands restored
- acres of uplands restored
- miles of instream and associated riparian habitats improved and restored
- number of fish passage barriers removed

The Alaska PFW Program's priority conservation measures for the next five years are presented in Table 1.

The strength of the PFW Program lies in its ability to conserve habitats by collaborating with numerous and diverse partners to implement cost effective, voluntary, habitat improvement projects.

A schoolyard habitat in Fairbanks, Alaska.

K. Mueller / USFWS



Goal 1: Conserve Habitat

Geographical Focus Areas

The State of Alaska can be generally characterized as a landscape of intact, functioning ecosystems, supporting waterfowl, marine and terrestrial mammals, and robust populations of resident, anadromous, and marine fish. Alaska's population centers and transportation networks, with their associated habitat impacts and threats, are located within this matrix of wild lands. The PFW Program's strategic planning process identified several geographic focus areas where financial resources and staff will be focused during the next five years. These areas represent the highest value habitats for anadromous fish and migratory waterfowl that are most vulnerable to human-caused impacts. The focus areas include:

Cook Inlet Basin

The Cook Inlet Basin includes the Anchorage Bowl, the Mat-Su Valley, and the Kenai Peninsula. Taken together, the Cook Inlet Basin encompass nearly 60,000 square miles. This area has a higher percentage of private landownership than other areas served by the Alaska PFW Program. Elevation in the region spans from sea level to the highest point in North America, Mount McKinley (20,320 feet). Several large rivers (including the Susitna, Kenai and Matanuska) drain glaciers in the surrounding mountains. The entire basin has abundant fish and wildlife resources, with many federal and state designated conservation units, including the majority of the state-managed critical habitat areas, game refuges, and wildlife sanctuaries.

Anchorage Bowl

This focus area, located on the shores of Cook Inlet, is home to more than half the state's population. This urban area provides unparalleled educational opportunities for a population that affects the rest of Alaska. Ecosystems within the focus area

include nearshore marine habitats, extensive estuarine mudflats and salt marsh, freshwater streams and lakes, mixed broadleaf-conifer forests, subalpine shrub thickets, and coastal alpine tundra. Land ownership consists of a matrix of private and public lands, with an extensive system of municipal parklands, military lands, and State lands. Land use patterns are diverse, with both commercial and residential lands, surrounded by estuarine and marine habitats to the west, and public lands to the north, east, and south. The area's streams and wetlands are important habitats for trust species. High priority habitats to be targeted for restoration and protection efforts include anadromous fish streams, wetlands, riparian habitats, and increasingly tenuous aquatic and terrestrial wildlife reserves and corridors.

Some of the most significant challenges to successful restoration and protection of fish and wildlife habitat in this focus area are continued habitat loss

and fragmentation stemming from increasing urbanization and development, increasing impacts of recreational use on streams and in remaining open spaces, and widespread establishment of invasive species.

Partnership opportunities include numerous state and local government agencies, the private sector, and the State's largest cadre of nonprofits, including Anchorage Waterways Council, Anchorage Park Foundation, and Great Land Trust.

Strategies for the program within this focus area include riparian and in-stream habitat restoration, largely in an urban, highly impacted environment; fish passage assessment and restoration, including barrier removal; invasive species management; schoolyard habitat projects; stormwater runoff mitigation; technical support for improved watershed planning; capacity building within the nonprofit community; and increased habitat stewardship actions.

Anchorage Bowl



A moose using a creek corridor in Anchorage. K. Mueller / USFWS



Goal 1: Conserve Habitat

Program efforts will address conservation needs in several existing conservation plans, including the State of Alaska's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, the Municipality of Anchorage's Salmon in the City Action Plan, the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan, the Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan, the Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan, Anchorage Coastal Management Plan, The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Cook Inlet Basin Ecoregional Assessment, and ADFG's Living with Wildlife in Anchorage Plan.

Matanuska-Susitna Valley

This focus area, home to more than 90,000 people, is encompassed by the Alaska Range to the north, the Talkeetna and Chugach Mountains to the east, Cook Inlet to the south,

and the Aleutian Range to the west. Trust species include five species of Pacific salmon, anadromous trout and char, and a diversity of migratory birds, including Tule white-fronted geese. This focus area was chosen because it contains the fastest growing communities in the state. This rapid and extensive urban development threatens diverse riparian and in-stream habitats needed by fish and wildlife resources. Additionally, because of its proximity to Anchorage, the largest population center in the state, it receives heavy recreational use which impacts every habitat type.

This focus area consists of rolling lowlands featuring hundreds of small lakes, bogs, and clear water streams. Large rivers, including the Susitna, Matanuska, and Knik, drain glaciers in the surrounding mountains. Mixed forests of white and Sitka spruce, aspen and birch dominate the area. Black spruce stands occur in lowland wet soils, ericaceous shrubs are dominant in open bogs, and tall scrub plant communities consisting primarily of willow and alder, occur in floodplains.

Land use includes tourism and recreation, gravel extraction, forestry, agriculture, large subdivisions, and commercial stores. The biggest threat in this focus area is lake shore

and streamside development, continued construction of new road-stream crossings with inadequate fish passage, and the habitat fragmentation associated with suburban sprawl. High priority habitats to be targeted for restoration and protection efforts include anadromous waters, wetlands, riparian habitats, and wildlife reserves and corridors in both wetland and upland habitats.

Some of the most important challenges to the successful restoration and protection of fish and wildlife habitat in this focus area are continued, minimally-planned rural development, proliferation of all-terrain and off road vehicle trails that cross anadromous streams, the spread of newly established invasive species, and limited public understanding of the value of intact habitats. Existing and future partnership opportunities are with the Mat-Su Borough, three Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, private land owners, local businesses, non-profit organizations, and the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership.

Program strategies in this focus area include riparian and in-stream habitat restoration and protection, fish passage assessment and restoration, invasive species management, schoolyard habitat development, stormwater runoff mitigation, support for watershed planning, capacity building in the nonprofit community, and increased outreach and education.

Program actions will address conservation needs in several existing conservation plans, including the State of Alaska's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, the Mat-Su Borough's Coastal Management Plan, The Nature Conservancy's Cook Inlet Basin Ecoregional Assessment, as well as the Strategic Action Plan of the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership.

Mat-Su Valley



All-terrain vehicle trail in the Mat-Su Valley. K. Mueller / USFWS

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat - protect the best and restore the rest

Kenai Peninsula



Kenai Peninsula

The Kenai Peninsula is located in South-central Alaska and is home to the Kenai River, one of the most ecological and economically important river systems in the State. This area contains a diversity of ecosystems ranging from glaciers and tundra to salt water marshes and muskegs, and plentiful fresh water in the form of wetlands, streams, rivers, and

lakes. The national importance of these resources is particularly evident when compared to habitats and fish populations elsewhere in the nation, where many resources have been severely impacted by human expansion and development. Important resources to the Service in this focal area include five species of Pacific salmon, anadromous trout and char, as well as a variety of migratory birds.

A significant proportion of this focal area contains Federal lands including the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Kenai Fjords National Park, and the Chugach National Forest. The majority of private land ownership is located on the lowlands with the population centers divided between the communities of Kenai, Soldotna, and Homer. Private land use is mainly residential and recreational and is mostly concentrated along the popular fishing streams. Land use on federal lands varies from wilderness to intensive use for minerals, oil, gas, and timber.

Species of concern in this focus area include: Stellers Eider (threatened), Kittlitz' murrelet (candidate), Cook Inlet Beluga Whale (endangered). Non-federally listed species of concern to the Service and program partners include Kenai Peninsula brown bears, blackpoll warbler, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Townsend's warbler. Increased population growth, unregulated development, habitat fragmentation, degraded water quality, loss of water quantity, and climate change are major threats faced by trust resources in this focal area. High priority habitats targeted for restoration and protection in this focus area include anadromous waters, riparian zones, and wetlands.

In this focus area, the Alaska PFW Program works with a broad array of stakeholder groups and conservation partners such as the ADFG, the Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) and private landowners. A major priority for the program is to expand the cost-

*Sockeye salmon migrating up the Kenai River. Kentaro Yasui / 2011
USFWS Alaska Fish Photo Contest.*



*"Combat fishing near the Russian/Kenai River confluence.
K. Mueller / USFWS"*

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat - protect the best and restore the rest



A section of Kenai River streambank before restoration (left) and after restoration(right). Dean Hughes / ADFG

share partnership with the ADFG. This very successful partnership has assisted the Alaska PFW Program in leveraging funds and providing technical and financial assistance to many private landowners over the past 15 years.

An additional program priority will be to work with non-traditional partners such as Cook Inlet Regional Incorporated, an Alaska Native corporation with significant land ownership on the Kenai Peninsula.

The Alaska PFW Program will also work closely with the Service's Fisheries Program, the Kenai Peninsula FHP, and the Northwestern Interior Forest LCC to identify and prioritize habitat restoration efforts in response to climate change impacts. Program strategies to address these impacts will focus on improving habitat connectivity and restoring riparian function.

With a rapidly growing population, the biggest challenges to the successful conservation of fish and wildlife habitat in this focus area are increasing road and subdivision development and limited public understanding of the value of intact habitat. We will continue to work with existing partners, such as ADFG, KWF, and the Alaska Department of Transportation on fish passage and riparian restoration programs, and will explore new opportunities for partnerships with local native Alaska Native entities, and agencies and non-profits working in the southern part of the Kenai Peninsula.

Strategies will include:

- Planning and implementing riparian and instream restoration and protection projects in critical areas.
- Working with partners to prioritize and remove fish barriers.
- Conducting public outreach about the importance of maintaining and restoring important riparian habitat.

Efforts will address conservation needs in several existing conservation plans, including the State of Alaska's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, Draft Kenai River Watershed Conservation Area Plan, Draft Kenai/Kasilof Conservation Area Plan, and the Draft North Kenai Conservation Area Plan.

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat - protect the best and restore the rest

Chena River near Fairbanks.
Katrina Mueller / USFWS



Greater Fairbanks Area (Tanana Valley Watershed)

This focus area surrounds Alaska's second largest urban area. Important species include three species of Pacific salmon (Chinook, coho and chum), and a diversity of migratory birds. The dominant ecosystem within this focus area is boreal evergreen needle leaf forest, including black spruce/scrub shrub, emergent wetlands, sloughs, white spruce forest and birch/aspens forest. Land uses include mining operations, gravel extraction, farming, large subdivisions, and commercial development. High priority habitats to be targeted for restoration and protection efforts include anadromous fish streams, wetlands, and riparian habitats.

Existing and expected partnership opportunities include the Tanana Valley Watershed Association, (TVWA), ADFG, Fairbanks SWCD,

Inset: citizen science salmon monitoring project on the Chena River.
Jessica Armstrong / USFWS

private landowners, gravel and gold mining operations, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, and Ducks Unlimited. Several of these organizations have joined with the Service to highlight Chinook salmon in the Chena River and promote this species as a potential recreational and tourism attraction for the local economy.

The most important challenges to the successful restoration and protection of fish and wildlife habitat in this focus area include rapid development along the already-urbanized Chena River and nearby sloughs, and limited public understanding of the value of intact habitat.

The most important strategies in this focus area include education and outreach through the

Schoolyard Habitat Program, continued stream-bank restoration workshops support for watershed planning with TVWA, organizing riparian management classes for agency staff and landowners, continuing the PFW Program with private landowners, and working with State and local agency partners to restore fish passage.

Program efforts will address conservation needs in several conservation plans, including the State of Alaska's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and Fairbanks North Star Borough Regional Comprehensive Plan. Staff will also continue to assess opportunities for developing a FHP for the Tanana Valley Watershed.

Goal 1: Conserve Habitat - protect the best and restore the rest

Nome watersheds

This focus area was chosen due to its century-long legacy of intensive placer mining for gold. Due to the increasing value of gold this area is being mined without a thorough understanding of the potential ecological impacts mining operations and equipment bring. Home to four species of Pacific salmon, as well as Dolly Varden char, whitefish, and a diversity of migratory birds, this area is characterized by tundra wetlands dominated by low shrub-sedge/lichen communities underlain by permafrost. Area wetlands provide important nesting, feeding, and rearing habitat for a variety of bird species, including shorebirds, waterfowl, and passerines. This focus area supports moose, black bear, red fox, lynx, river otter, beaver, muskrat, mink, least weasel, and other small mammals.

Numerous opportunities for creating new partnerships to restore fish habitat in this focus area exist. Potential partners include local landowners, economic development organizations, and tribal groups.

Some of the most important challenges to the successful restoration and protection of fish and wildlife habitat in this focus area are removing fish passage barriers, maintaining/improving riparian habitat, and educating the public on the value of intact habitat through outreach efforts like the Schoolyard Habitat Program.

Strategies include watershed planning, working with individual miners and large mining corporations to reclaim and restore habitat, and working with partners such as Alaska State agencies to ensure that fish passage is maintained in all culverts in the focus area.



These actions will address conservation needs in several existing conservation plans, including the State of Alaska's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, Nome Coastal Management Plan, and Bering Strait Regional Community Development Plan.

Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska features the nation's largest remaining tracts of intact coastal rainforest, and its associated estuarine, intertidal, and freshwater habitats. The focus area hosts six species of Pacific salmon and steelhead, over 20,000 bald eagles, and some of the highest densities of brown bears in the world. Riverine wetlands, such as those at the mouths of the Stikine, Mendenhall, and Alsek Rivers, are major migratory bird stopover areas, provide estuarine rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and other species, and nesting sites for waterfowl. Conservation issues in Southeast Alaska differ substantially from other regions of Alaska due to geographic, climatic, and physical distinctions.

Our most important challenge to the successful restoration and protection of fish and wildlife habitat is the fact that Southeast Alaska's most productive habitats – its coastline and forelands – are also the most desirable lands for development in the region. As communities expand, native

wetlands become scarce, and urban development impacts to streams and riparian corridors can increase. Years of road building during the pioneering days of the timber industry has left a legacy of fish-bearing streams bisected by improperly placed and/or sized culverts, and in urbanizing areas, stormwater and invasive plants diminish riparian area productivity.

Opportunities for the PFW Program in Southeast Alaska include maintaining existing partnerships and developing new projects with watershed councils, the Southeast Alaska FHP (candidate), and municipalities in Yakutat, Haines, Skagway, Juneau, Ketchikan, and Prince of Wales Island. These communities contain a larger proportion of municipal, Alaska Native entities, and private lands than other Southeast communities enveloped by the Tongass National Forest.

Program strategies include habitat restoration, project coordination and implementation, technical assistance to partners, invasive plant management, watershed assessments, and fish passage assessment and improvement. These efforts are often most effective in mixed-ownership watersheds. Program staff make an effort to draw from conservation actions identified in existing conservation plans, including the State of Alaska's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, Southeast Sustainable Salmon Strategy, Alaska Clean Water Action Program, TNC/Audubon Alaska's Southeast Alaska Conservation Assessment, and local watershed management plans and assessments.

Goal 2: Broaden and Strengthen Partnerships

leverage partner resources to conserve fish and wildlife habitat

Since its establishment in Alaska, the PFW Program has continued to engage external partners in stewardship activities that restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitats. We will work with existing partners while proactively reaching out to new partners in the coming years. We will also sustain the Service's leadership role in creating strong and resilient partnerships to achieve on-the-ground conservation results.

Goal 2 Objectives

1. Strengthen and sustain our most productive partnerships (internal and external)
2. Foster lasting habitat conservation partnerships with Alaska Native organizations.
3. Take advantage of opportunities to establish new partnerships.
4. Increase delivery of Service technical expertise to existing partnerships.
5. Serve as a funding resource and habitat conservation information clearinghouse to existing and potential partners.

Key Strategic Activities

Program staff will identify and address habitat conservation training and organizational needs of key partners through the following actions:

- Identify relevant training opportunities through the Service's National Conservation Training Center or other providers.
- Share Service expertise with our partners through informal events and delivery of formal local training programs.

- Provide opportunities for partners to incorporate summer student interns and project-related training needs into cooperative agreements.
- Facilitate partner training opportunities through regional forums including: watershed work groups, habitat restoration workshops, Alaska FHP science symposiums, and other professional association annual meetings.
- Schedule formal annual meetings with at least five key partners to assess and/or address capacity and training needs.
- Create opportunities to improve habitat conservation prioritization by facilitating interaction between partners and other Service programs (e.g., Fisheries, Migratory Birds, Refuges, Coastal, NFPP, and Conservation Planning Assistance).
- Increase success rate of Alaska conservation funding proposals by expanding partner understanding of the primary objectives and evaluation criteria of nationally competitive habitat conservation and restoration funding programs.

Performance Measures

This strategic plan goal is measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. The ability to successfully meet objectives for this goal is constrained by Service staffing levels, partner capacity, accessibility of remote coastal communities and available funding. Many of our Alaska partners, while effective, are small organizations and have limited unrestricted operating support. Through on-going interaction with our partners we will incorporate

feedback on the value of the PFW Program expertise and support, as well as the organizational capacity and effectiveness of program partners. Ultimately, the effectiveness of our efforts to meet this goal will be quantitatively measured through achievement of annual habitat conservation performance targets described earlier. In addition to documenting achievement of performance targets, the Alaska PFW Program will track the following outcomes in an effort to document actions to broaden and strengthen our partnerships over the next five years:

- Work with partners to achieve at least five successfully funded projects through non-Service programs such as the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and private foundations.
- Document results of partners capacity assessment meetings (five assessments per year).
- Support the capacity development and technical assistance needs of program partners by facilitating four trainings relating to topics of interest of our partners.
- Incorporate training needs of our partners into annual project cooperative agreements.

Goal 3: Improve Information-Sharing & Communication

supporting partner needs, achieving conservation results

Effective information sharing and communication with our partners, stakeholders, decision makers, and others to restore and enhance priority habitats is a major goal of the PFW Program. Information sharing is, unto itself, one of the primary strengths of the program. Based on current staffing and funding levels, we expect to maintain our current, comprehensive level of coordination with other agencies (local, State and Federal) and stakeholders in project development and implementation, and to make modest increased investments, particularly with private landowners working through watershed organizations.

Goal 3 Objectives

1. Maintain our current comprehensive level of coordination with other agencies (local, State and Federal), stakeholders in project development and implementation, and community-based watershed organizations.
2. Address information needs of the PFW Program and its partners.
3. Ensure partners have easy access to the most current GIS, fish and wildlife, and other geospatial datasets to plan, execute and monitor habitat conservation projects.
4. Improve understanding of and support for PFW Program projects and related activities.
5. Communicate program outcomes and activities within Region 7 and nationally.

Key Strategic Activities

- Maintain current comprehensive level of coordination with other agencies (local, State and Federal), stakeholders in project development and implementation, and community-based watershed organizations.
- Encourage Program participation in regional NFHP and relevant LCCs and consider the strategic actions plans and priorities of these partnerships as PFW Program projects are being developed.
- Routinely present papers and posters on program-supported projects at state, regional, and national symposia and conferences.
- Host habitat restoration and conservation workshops and training events for program partners.
- Address information needs of partners by supporting development and distribution of curricula, maps, technical tools, and publications in order to meet locally-important information needs.
- Work with R7 Fisheries Outreach Coordinator to prepare project-by project communications package for distribution to a variety of internal and external audiences.
- Communicate program outcomes through Regional and National Coastal & Partners Coordinators meetings.

- Identify projects and partners to formally recognize through annual regional Honor Awards, the DOI Partners in Conservation Award program, and other venues.
- Seek out opportunities to conduct field trips for key audiences to increase understanding and appreciation for PFW Program projects, program staff and program partners.
- Work with partners to produce a final report for each completed project that documents the project's scope, goals and objectives, methods, and outcomes for the purpose of informing stakeholders, permitting agencies, and practitioners of similar projects as well as serving as the basis for future project monitoring efforts.

Performance Measures

The number of salient information sharing activities and associated audiences will be documented as an indicator of work accomplishments. In addition to the above actions, over the next five years, the PFW Program will document the following outcomes in an effort to demonstrate information sharing and communication with our partners and the general public:

- Work with the Service's Fisheries and Partners Programs to deliver fisheries and habitat conservation outreach to approximately 7,000 Alaskans annually at the Great Alaska Sportsman Show and Alaska Forum on the Environment.

Goal 3: Improve Information-Sharing and Communication

- Identify opportunities to coordinate with Alaska land trusts on habitat projects.
- Nominate up to three partners for Region 7 Honor Award Recognition. Document previous actions to recognize the work of our partners.
- Document and distribute at least three program successes to national, state and local audiences through a variety of media each year.

*Fourth graders at Knik Arm Elementary are prepared for a fun and educational day creating a schoolyard habitat behind their school.
Photo by Katrina Mueller / USFWS*



Goal 4: Enhance Our Workforce

a fully integrated conservation delivery framework supported by experienced and qualified staff

Over the past five years the Alaska PFW Program has reached many of its goals for building conservation capacity within Region 7. To be more effective, the Alaska PFW Program must work across Service habitat conservation partnership and other programs to fully realize its goals, objectives and outcomes.

The current staffing profile for Region 7 Habitat Conservation Partnership Programs (Coastal Program, PFW, NFPP, and NFHP) is shown in Table 2.

Alaska Region Conservation Partnerships Program staff are encouraged to join professional societies such as the American Fisheries Society, American Water Resources Association, River Restoration Northwest, River Management Society, The Wildlife Society, Society for Ecological Restoration, and Society for Conservation Biology.

While the small size and wide geographic spread of our Conservation Partnerships staff limit our options for formal mentoring programs, these same

factors demand that our field staff regularly consult with each other to address project-specific and programmatic issues. For example, our Habitat Restoration Hydrologist/Engineer plays a key consulting role in project design at all field stations. This on-going collaboration between staff and field offices fosters a shared learning environment that provides similar benefits to a formal mentoring program.

Alaska PFW Program staff have also participated in several temporary details at the Region 7 and Washington Offices. We will continue to encourage these details to allow our staff to gain exposure to regional and national-level policy development and implementation. Annually, one or more of our field offices hosts volunteers, Student Conservation Association interns, or early-career seasonal employees. While these individuals provide project support services to our program staff, their presence also provides an opportunity for PFW to develop mentoring skills.

Table 2: Region 7 Habitat Conservation Partnership Programs staffing profile.

Office	Staff
Regional Office (Anchorage)	1 Conservation Partnerships Coordinator 1 NFHP Coordinator 1 Fisheries Outreach Coordinator
Anchorage FWFO	1 Supervisory Habitat Hydrologist/Engineer 2 Habitat Restoration Biologists 1 Coastal Program Manager
Kenai FWFO	2 Habitat Restoration Biologists
Juneau FWFO	1 Supervisory Habitat Biologist/Coastal Program Manager 1 Habitat Restoration Biologist
Fairbanks FWFO	1 Habitat Restoration Biologist

Goal 4 Objectives

1. Strengthen program capacity to deliver services in Alaska.
2. Maintain staff competency in stream and habitat assessments, restoration, fish passage design, coordination, facilitation, and project management/financial assistance.

Key Strategic Activities

- Support staff participation in and attendance at annual meetings of professional societies such as the American Fisheries Society, American Water Resources Association, River Restoration Northwest, River Management Society, Land Trust Alliance, Restore America's Estuaries, The Wildlife Society, Society for Ecological Restoration, and Society for Conservation Biology.
- Encourage staff to participate in temporary details at the Alaska Regional or other Service offices. Ensure these details allow staff to gain exposure to regional and national-level policy development and implementation.
- Motivate staff to coordinate, lead, or present training events for professional development of themselves and partners.
- Support each of our Conservation Partnerships staff in attending 40 hours of training annually for professional development (training opportunities particularly valuable to Alaska PFW Program staff are identified in Table 2).

Goal 4: Enhance Our Workforce

Performance Measures

Performance under this goal will be measured by staff completion of training as described in their Individual Development Plans, documentation of presentations provided and/or papers published, and the breadth of involvement in professional societies and peer working groups. The ultimate measure of success under this goal is the contributions of program staff to the advancement of the habitat protection and restoration field in Alaska and elsewhere. Specific metrics under this goal include:

- 40 hours of training annually for professional development in support of the goals of this strategic plan.
- Support opportunities for temporary details and/or mentoring.
- Achievement of annual Government and Performance Results Act (GPRA) targets.

The Alaska PFW Program partnered with Wildlife Forever and Afognak Native Corporation to pilot a new type of portable bridge to reduce potential barriers to fish passage. D.Wigglesworth / USFWS

Table 3: Training opportunities for Region 7 staff.

Training Type	Course Name
Technical	River Restoration Northwest Design Symposium
	Alaska Statewide Habitat Restoration Workshop
	Designing for Aquatic Organism Passage at Road-Stream Crossings
	Bio-Engineered Streambank Restoration
	Applied Fluvial Geomorphology
	River Morphology and Applications
	River Assessment and Monitoring
	River Restoration and Natural Channel Design
	Stream Habitat Measurement Techniques
	Introduction to River Science Management
	Engineered Log Jam Technology
	Fish-Friendly Stream Crossings
	Decision Analysis for Natural Resource Management
	Macroinvertebrate Ecology & Identification
	Freshwater Biomonitoring Using Benthic Macroinvertebrates
	GIS Introduction for Conservation Professionals
	Financial Assistance
River Restoration Professional Certificate Program	



Goal 5: Increase Accountability

maintain strong performance in the area of fiscal management and program implementation

Goal 5 Objective

Sustain strong track record of fiscal and program management.

Key Strategic Activities

- Allocating a majority (target: 70%) of regional PFW Program funds to on-the-ground projects, with the remaining 30% used for staffing, project based travel, and other direct administrative support services.
- Contingent on funding, evaluate and expand PFW field office staff capacity to the area of greatest need and increase annual conservation target output by approximately 5% per additional staffer annually.

- Accomplish four management control reviews by the Conservation Partnerships Coordinator (one per FWFO) during the next five year period.
- Enter all habitat restoration and technical assistance projects into the HabITS database annually, and link all projects to trust species.
- Use images to document at least 75% of our project accomplishments in HaBITS.

Performance Measures

Control audits and frequent communication between the Regional Office and the Field Offices document that spending and programmatic activities are in alignment with regional and national program objectives.

Performance measures for this goal include:

- Document completion of four management control reviews over the next five years by Conservation Partnerships Coordinator.
- Conduct annual meeting of Conservation Partnerships Program staff to share information, discuss performance, and ensure consistent and cost effective service delivery.
- Track annual allocation goal of 70% funding for on-the-ground projects.
- Evaluate status of legacy projects (before 2008) in HabITS to move these projects from active to completed status in HabITS.

Streambank restoration along the Chena River. Photo by Chris Grass



Stakeholder Involvement

Strategic Planning Process

In early 2004, Alaska Region staff hosted meetings with our partners in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai, and Juneau. A total of 35 Federal, State, and local agencies, community groups, Alaska Native entities, and non-governmental organizations sent representatives, as well as several individual private landowners. Upon completion of Part 1 (Vision Document) of the Alaska PFW Program's National Strategic Plan in 2006, we drafted this step-down plan and provided it to our original stakeholders for further input. This step-down plan focused and guided our activities for the past five years.

Strategic planning continued to be an on-going activity for the Program after the initial step-down plan was completed. Over the past five years, Program biologists worked continuously with our key partners to address annual and long term program needs and direction through a network of watershed councils, roundtables, NFHP meetings, and interaction with other Service programs and the State of Alaska resource agencies. Program partners

contributed to the development of this new strategic plan by developing habitat conservation targets and implementing of habitat prioritization assessments and watershed planning within key focus areas.

Summary of Stakeholder Input

The PFW Program is well established in Alaska. The program has a strong track record of accomplishing on-the-ground conservation. We heard from our stakeholders that the program is flexible and responsive to their needs, and that we have done a good job of minimizing our partner's administrative workload associated with participating in the program. Our stakeholders repeatedly voiced concerns about several administrative and programmatic aspects of the program. In particular, we heard concern about the challenge that small landowners face in providing the desired 50% non-Federal match, and the limitations of the program's \$25,000 financial assistance cap (to address this concern, we have since successfully received funding cap waivers from the Washington Office on several occasions). Our agency

partners also called for increased physical science capability to augment the program's biological capacity. We have addressed this concern in part through establishment of a restoration hydrologist/engineer position in the Anchorage FWFO.

Stakeholders also recommended identification of program focus areas, both geographic and issue-based, a need addressed by this step-down plan. Finally, stakeholders expressed concern that site-specific restoration projects may achieve limited success in the face of broad-scale environmental threats, such as rapid urban development, climate change, and the spread of invasive species. These concerns remain valid for the PFW Program, as well as all Service programs. The PFW Program has ramped up support for invasive species early detection and rapid response projects and continues to participate in internal LCC advisory groups. This will help inform the work of LCCs and their steering committees, and also increase understanding of the PFW Program.

The Alaska PFW Program supported a Wounded Warrior project to clean up an old weir site in Yukon Flats.



Stakeholder Involvement

Selected Agencies and Organizations Directly and Indirectly Contributing to Strategic Plan Development

Environmental Protection Agency	Alaska Natural Heritage Program	Palmer Soil and Water Conservation District
National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance	Municipality of Anchorage	Private individuals
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Anchorage Waterways Council	City & Borough of Juneau
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Fairbanks North Star Borough	Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
NOAA Fisheries	Kachemak Heritage Land Trust	Audubon Alaska
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District	Great Land Trust
Alaska Department of Natural Resources	Kenai Watershed Forum	Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Alaska DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation	Matanuska-Susitna Borough	The Nature Conservancy
	Anchorage Watershed Mgmt. Services	Juneau Watershed Partnership

Controlling invasive reed canary grass in Westchester Lagoon near the site of a fish passage restoration project.
D.Wigglesworth / USFWS



Appendix A: Selected Species Benefiting from Alaska Coastal Program Activities

Aleutian Tern, <i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i>	Horned Puffin, <i>Fratercula corniculata</i>
American Peregrine Falcon, <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i> (Delisted)	Hudsonian Godwit, <i>Limosa haemastica</i>
Arctic Loon, <i>Gavia arctica</i>	King Eider, <i>Somateria spectabilis</i>
Bald Eagle, <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Kittlitz's Murrelet, <i>Brachyramphus brevirostris</i> (Candidate)
Black brant (<i>Branta bernicla nigricans</i>)	Marbled Murrelet, <i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>
Black Oystercatcher, <i>Haematopus bachmani</i>	Marten, <i>Martes americana</i>
Black Turnstone, <i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>	Northern Goshawk, <i>Accipiter gentilis laingi</i>
Black-bellied Plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Olive-sided Flycatcher, <i>Contopus cooperi</i>
Black-legged Kittiwake, <i>Larus tridactyla</i>	Pacific lamprey, <i>Lampetra tridentata</i>
Blackfish (Alaska), <i>Dallia pectoralis</i>	Pacific Loon, <i>Gavia pacifica</i>
Blackpoll Warbler, <i>Dendroica striata</i>	Pink salmon, <i>Oncorhynchus gorbusha</i>
Brown bear, <i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i>	Rainbow trout, <i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>
Chinook (king) salmon, <i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i>	Red-throated Loon, <i>Gavia stellata</i>
Chum salmon, <i>Oncorhynchus keta</i>	Rock Sandpiper, <i>Calidris ptilocnemis</i>
Coho (silver) salmon, <i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i>	Rusty Blackbird, <i>Euphagus carolinus</i>
Common Loon, <i>Gavia immer</i>	Sandhill Crane, <i>Grus canadensis</i>
Common (Northern) Raven, <i>Corvus corax</i>	Short-billed Dowitcher, <i>Limnodromus griseus</i>
Cook Inlet beluga whale, <i>Delphinapterus leucas</i> (Endangered)	Sockeye salmon, <i>Oncorhynchus nerka</i>
Cutthroat trout, <i>Oncorhynchus clarkii</i>	Steelhead trout, <i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>
Dolly Varden, <i>Salvelinus malma</i>	Steller's Eider, <i>Polysticta stelleri</i> (Threatened)
Dunlin, <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Surfbird, <i>Aphriza virgata</i>
Emperor Goose, <i>Chen canagica</i>	Three-spine Stickleback, <i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>
Great Blue Heron, <i>Ardea herodias</i>	Townsend's Warbler, <i>Dendroica townsendi</i>
Greater White-Fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons</i>)	Trumpeter Swan, <i>Cygnus buccinator</i>
Gyrfalcon, <i>Falco rusticolus</i>	Western brook lamprey, <i>Lampetra richardsoni</i>
Harbor seal, <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Western Sandpiper, <i>Calidris mauri</i>
Harlequin Duck, <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	Whimbrel, <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
	Wood frog, <i>Rana sylvatica</i>

Sandhill Cranes. K. Mueller / USFWS



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Alaska Region (Region 7)
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

<http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/restoration/partners.htm>
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