



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release: January 21, 1994

Georgia Parham - FWS
202-208-5634

Scott Smullen - NMFS
301-713-2370

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WILL STUDY ATLANTIC SALMON FOR POSSIBLE LISTING UNDER ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service today announced they are beginning a joint study to determine whether U.S. populations of anadromous Atlantic salmon in New England should be listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

The action comes after a 90-day review of a petition submitted to the Fish and Wildlife Service last October and to the National Marine Fisheries Service in November. The petition, filed by the Biodiversity Legal Foundation, RESTORE: The North Woods, and Jeffrey Elliot, seeks listing of the species throughout its U.S. range -- from the Connecticut River to the St. Croix River on the Canadian border.

The petition introduces information on current and historical Atlantic salmon populations, identifies possible threats, and cites numerous scientific articles. Based on review of the petition and other available data, the agencies believe listing may be warranted and will now begin a thorough review of all pertinent information.

(more)

A decision on whether to initiate listing procedures will be made by October 1994.

"Atlantic salmon are one of the wonders of our northeastern rivers," said Mollie Beattie, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "We will seek information from all those who care about the salmon before we decide whether this species should be proposed for protection under the Endangered Species Act."

"We have been working cooperatively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Northeast for the restoration of self-sustaining populations of Atlantic salmon for years," said Rolland Schmitt, director of the National Marine Fisheries Service. "Work on this petition will set precedent for the two agencies to combine resources, assess progress, and plan strategies together."

Anadromous Atlantic salmon spend the early portions of their lives in fresh water before migrating to salt water. As adults, they return to freshwater rivers to spawn. The species was once considered abundant in many New England rivers, but by 1870 populations in all but a few waterways had disappeared. Construction of hydroelectric dams, pollution, and overfishing contributed to this decline.

Cooperative efforts among the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and New England states have partially restored salmon runs in the Penobscot, Connecticut, and Merrimack rivers during the past two decades.

To ensure the review of the species' status is complete and based on the best available data, the agencies are asking the public for any information concerning the status of U.S. populations of the anadromous Atlantic salmon. The agencies will review the public comments along with all other available information to determine whether a listing action is warranted.

-DOI-