U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Lake Sammamish Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership

The Partnership

The Lake Sammamish Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership will help connect people in the Seattle metro-area to the great outdoors and, in particular, efforts to restore kokanee salmon runs in the Lake Sammamish Watershed.

urban wildlife refuge PARTNERSHIP

Who knew what the plight of a few "little red fish" would inspire? The Lake Sammamish Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is the result of citizens, land owners, nonprofits, and local, state, tribal and federal governments coming together to restore native kokanee salmon populations and the ecological integrity of the greater Lake Sammamish Basin.

With historical runs estimated at 10,000 fish annually, Lake Sammamish kokanee salmon filled a critical ecological role within the watershed and were an important subsistence and cultural resource to the local tribes. These kokanee have experienced dramatic declines over the years, including a return of only 58 spawning adults in the 2010-11 season and the extinction of one of the lake's populations.

In response to such declines, this great host of partners has developed and is implementing a multi-layered recovery approach including: habitat restoration; landscape scale conservation; climate change research; fish supplementation; citizen science; and educational programming and information. The progress accomplished by this partnership towards these ends serves as both an example for others to follow and a great foundation for the restoration of these native fish.

With 22% of Washington State residents living within this watershed, the Lake Sammamish Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is a unique opportunity to not only restore the kokanee and the expansive

ecosystem that these fish depend on, but to serve as a driving force to connect a large number of people to nature and promote stewardship of this watershed.

This Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership designation by the Service will bring partners together and provide information on how the public can help conserve native species and their habitats for future generations. It builds on existing public lands within and nearby the Lake Sammamish watershed that collectively provide access to over 600 acres for the public to connect with their wildlife heritage and the land. This network of partnership land includes Lake Sammamish State Park, Marymoor Park, and the Issaquah State Hatchery, as well as city parks and trails crossing Kokanee spawning streams. It will also make the connection between recovery of ecosystems and benefits to people. The opportunities to enjoy and connect to the environment are as diverse as the people, including: picnicking, swimming, fishing, boating, biking, hiking, geocaching, bird watching and salmon viewing.

This project successfully competed for the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership designation in 2013 and is currently one of only eight in the country. Implementation is now underway, with partners working to develop an interpretive plan and concept design that will address the goals of this partnership. The designation of the Lake Sammamish Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is a formal recognition of excellence under the Service's Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative. Under the initiative, the Service is striving to make the outdoors more meaningful and accessible to urban audiences. This partnership provides cost effective, innovative ways to enable urban communities to learn more about the National Wildlife Refuge System and wildlife conservation and to gain an appreciation for the outdoors.

Implementation of *Conserving the Future*

The Service's vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System, entitled *Conserving the Future*, proposes in Recommendation 13 an Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative that will increase the Service's relevancy to urban citizens. This initiative will establish measures to help define and achieve excellence, create a framework for creating new urban partnerships, and establish a refuge presence in ten demographically and geographically varied cities in the U.S.

More Information

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