DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
news release

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release: April 20, 1994 Hugh Vickery 202-208-5634

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE JOINS WITH NATIONAL BIOLOGICAL SURVEY TO CONDUCT STUDIES ON SPORT FISH

In the future, anglers will benefit from healthier, more productive recreational fisheries and aquatic ecosystems resulting from two studies being undertaken jointly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Biological Survey.

The research, funded through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration program, will allow Federal, State, and Tribal fishery managers to match more accurately sport fish broodstock with habitat conditions and maintain genetic diversity in recreational fisheries.

The studies will be conducted by National Biological Survey laboratories in Kearneysville, West Virginia, and Wellsboro, Pennsylvania.

"These interagency research efforts represent the Interior Department's continued commitment to enhancing our recreational fisheries," said Mollie Beattie, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition, the information will allow fishery managers to better determine the growth and survival of hatchery fish released into the wild.

"Finding out how best to protect fish habitat is an essential part of our mission," said F. Eugene Hester, Acting Director of NBS. "It is important that we meet the research needs of our primary clients, which are the other bureaus at the Department of the Interior."

The first study will establish a National Fish Broodstock Database and Registry. The registry will compile information on breeding history, hatchery performance, and contributions to sport fisheries from hatchery-released fish.

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This will help meet fishery managers' growing need for detailed genetic information on hatchery and wild stocks of important recreational species.

Once completed, the registry will make it easier to identify effective and safe recreational fishery broodstocks for stocking in rivers, streams, and lakes.

A second, complementary study will develop natural genetic markers to enable recreational fishery managers to determine the growth and survival of hatchery fish after they are released into the wild.

"Genetic marking provides a better alternative to other tagging methods because it allows us to do the tracking without associated fish mortality," said Hester.

The Service is providing $440,000 of Wallop-Breaux funds over a four-year period for these efforts. The funds are derived from a 10-percent excise tax on fishing equipment and a 3-percent tax on electric trolling motors and sonar fish finders.

The National Biological Survey gathers, analyzes and disseminates biological information helpful for good stewardship of natural resources. The information is useful to wildlife and fisheries managers interested in protecting resources and avoiding costly environmental "train wrecks" that can stymie development projects. The Survey is designed to serve as an information clearinghouse for use by local communities, development interests, wildlife managers, land owners and private and nonprofit groups.

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