



Endangered Species Act Alert 2000-3

RE: NMFS' Critical Habitat Designation
DATE: March 2, 2000

On February 16, 2000, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) designated critical habitat for 19 populations of salmon and steelhead in Washington, Oregon, California and Idaho. The rule will take effect on March 17.

Critical habitat for threatened or endangered species includes areas that have the physical and biological features necessary for the survival of the species, and areas that may require special management considerations or protection. A designation of critical habitat accomplishes several things:

- It clearly identifies critical habitat areas and describes the features within those areas that are essential to the species;
- It focuses federal, state and private conservation and management efforts on critical areas;
- It provides federal agencies with a clear indication as to when consultation under section 7 of the ESA is required.

In designating critical habitat, NMFS considers the habitat requirements of listed salmon and steelhead. These include:

- Space for growth (individuals and populations)
- Food, water, air, light, and other nutritional/physiological requirements
- Cover or shelter
- Sites for breeding or rearing of offspring
- Habitats that are protected from disturbance, or that illustrate historical distribution patterns of the species.

In addition, essential habitat elements are identified. For listed salmon and steelhead, these include spawning sites, food resources, water quality and quantity, and riparian vegetation.

The designation of critical habitat does not result in any new regulations. However, the designation highlights the range of activities that could impact critical habitat, including planning and zoning, development, water withdrawals, stormwater management, infrastructure placement, timber harvesting, livestock grazing, diking and streambank stabilization, and habitat restoration.

Two examples for chinook:

Puget Sound ESU:

River basins: Nooksack, Skagit, Stillaguamish, Snohomish, Green/Duwamish, Puyallup, Nisqually, Skokomish, Dungeness, Cedar, Elwha.

Major bays and estuarine/marine areas: South Sound, Hood Canal, Elliott Bay, Possession Sound, Admiralty Inlet, Saratoga Passage, Rosario Strait, Strait of Georgia, Haro Strait, Strait of San Juan de Fuca.

Counties: Lewis, Thurston, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Clallam, Kitsap, Island, King, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish (WA).

Dams/reservoirs: Elwha Dam

Lower Columbia River ESU:

River basins: Grays, Elochoman, Kalama, Lewis, Washougal, White Salmon, Cowlitz, Coweeman, Klaskanine, Clackamas, Sandy, Hood.

Major bays and estuarine/marine areas: Youngs Bay, Columbia River, Columbia River estuary.

Counties: Hood River, Klickitat, Wasco, Clackamas, Multnomah, Clatsop, Multnomah, Washington, Marion (OR); Skamania, Columbia, Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Wahkiakum, Pierce, Yakima, Pacific (WA).

Dams/reservoirs: Condit Dam, The Dalles Dam, Bull Run Dam 2, Merwin Dam.

Help Spread the Word

Parametrix project managers are encouraged to share this information with clients who may be interested in, or affected by, ESA listings and issues. Additional questions should be addressed to Megan Callahan Grant, ESA Program Policy Analyst, who can direct them to the appropriate ESA Program staff member.