



Alaska's Coastal Program

Caring for Alaska's Coastal Habitats

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program is to conserve healthy coastal ecosystems for the benefit of fish, wildlife, and people. It accomplishes this through cooperative partnerships that identify, restore, and protect habitat in priority coastal areas.



Alaska's 34,000 miles of shoreline comprise over a third of the United States' coasts.

Importance of Coastal Resources

Nationwide, coastal ecosystems make up only 10 percent of the land area, but 80 percent of the nation's waterfowl and non-game migratory bird species depend on these areas for nesting, foraging, and resting habitats.

Alaska's world-famous anadromous fish resources and shellfish industry depend on coastal ecosystems. Estuaries, nearshore marine waters, and coastal wetlands are also vital to the state's spectacular seabird and shorebird populations. All of Alaska's threatened and endangered animals live in or near coastal or marine habitats.



Why Do Alaska's Coastal Habitats Need Help?

Three quarters of Alaska's residents live in its southern coastal ecosystems. These systems support a diversity of fish and wildlife species, while providing jobs, subsistence foods, and recreational opportunities for Alaskans and visitors. As the coastal population increases, and recreational and commercial enterprises expand, there is a growing need to maintain and restore the functions of these irreplaceable ecosystems.

Coastal Program Facts

The Coastal Program supports voluntary partnerships that restore and protect wetland, riparian, and upland coastal habitats.

The Coastal Program:

- Supports projects on both private and public lands;
- Encourages broad partnerships with other Federal, State, Native, and local government agencies, conservation organizations, businesses, and private landowners;
- Provides partners with both technical and financial assistance for on-the-ground fish and wildlife projects;
- Leverages U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funds with partner funds and in-kind services to increase our ability to conserve important habitats;
- Assists partners in applying for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Wetlands, North American Wetlands Conservation, and Private Stewardship Grants, as well as grants from other Federal agencies.

What Does the Coastal Program Do?

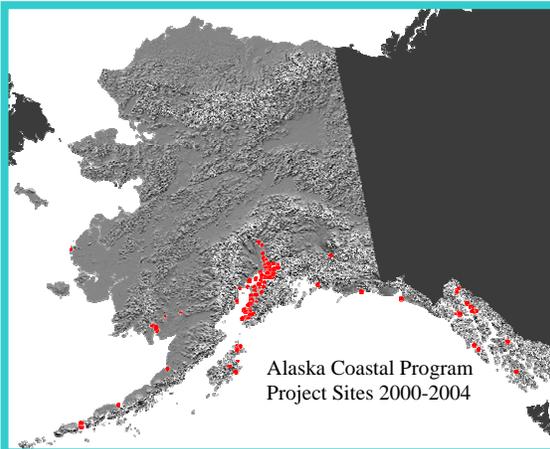
In Alaska, the Coastal Program provides technical and financial assistance for project that:

- Protect or restore coastal habitats;
- Compile and analyze coastal natural resource data;
- Inform and educate about coastal fish and wildlife resources and their habitats.

Project Examples

The Coastal Program supports a diversity of projects, including those that:

- Restore stream-side and coastal habitats;
- Protect undeveloped coastal mud flats, tidal marshes, wetlands, riparian areas, buffering uplands, and other coastal habitats;
- Improve fish passage;
- Control exotic invasive species;
- Assess threats to coastal resources, and develop solutions to those threats;
- Inform the public about the values of coastal habitats and low-impact methods of access, use or development.



Alaska's Coastal Program provides technical and financial support for South coastal Alaska projects that identify, protect, and restore high priority coastal habitats.

Accomplishments

Since establishment in 2000, Alaska's Coastal Program has cooperated on more than 120 projects.

Recent partnerships include:

Habitat Protection Funding. The Coastal Program has become an information clearinghouse for partners in pursuit of private and agency funding for habitat protection projects. We actively reach out to state agencies and non-governmental organizations to educate them about available funding programs, and provide technical assistance, including grant writing support. Since 2000, our partners have successfully competed for eight North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants, nine National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants, and three National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants totaling almost \$9,000,000.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Special Areas Inholdings Catalogues. Nearly 4 million acres of state land in Alaska are designated as Game Refuges, Sanctuaries, or Critical Habitat Areas. These projects allowed Alaska Department of Fish and Game to inventory private in-holdings in its 9 Cook Inlet and 5 Southeast Alaska Special Areas, and to inform landowners about voluntary habitat conservation options.

Fish Creek Fish Passage. The Coastal Program partnered with the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association and Alaska Department of Fish & Game to restructure a weir at the outlet of Big Lake and to construct a roughened channel downstream, allowing juvenile sockeye salmon to access the 2,500 acre Big Lake system for the first time in over 20 years.

For more information about these or other projects in Southcentral and Southwest Alaska, contact John DeLapp of the Anchorage F&W Field Office at 907/271 1799, john_delapp@fws.gov.

Ship Creek Restoration Coordination. The Coastal Program is partnering with Anchorage Waterways Council on a comprehensive watershed and fisheries restoration initiative on Anchorage's Ship Creek, in an effort to return the 29 mile-long stream to a more natural condition favorable to wild fish runs.

Green Zone Conservation Planning. The Coastal Program is supporting the Southeast Alaska Land Trust in prioritizing coastal habitats for protection in a 20 mile stretch of coastline immediately north of Juneau. Two major habitat protection projects are underway or planned, with nearly 400 acres of critical coastal wetlands and uplands to be protected for wildlife habitat and public use.

Cook Inlet Important Bird Areas (IBAs). This project supported Audubon Alaska's efforts to identify areas in the Cook Inlet coastal region that are of particular importance to waterfowl and shorebirds. The IBA program is a proactive, voluntary effort to identify and highlight critical bird habitats on a regional basis.

Pullen Creek Restoration Planning. This project allows the Skagway Traditional Council and the Taiya Inlet Watershed Council to identify habitat restoration needs, generate community interest, and identify funding sources for work on this impaired urban stream, where up to 800,000 cruise ship visitors annually have the opportunity to observe spawning coho and chum salmon.

For projects in Southeast Alaska, contact Neil Stichert of the Juneau F&W Field Office at 907/586-7482, neil_stichert@fws.gov.