

*ODFW IVA9 - Update Priority Area Designations for Salmon and Steelhead*

Prior to the major work season for habitat restoration in 1999 (and no later than March 31, 1999), ODFW will work with NMFS staff, scientists, and other appropriate entities to further refine and map priority areas designated for steelhead. Similarly, core area maps for coho salmon will be reviewed and updated, and a determination made on whether existing core area maps for chinook and chum salmon can be updated or should be replaced with a different approach to identifying priority areas. The effect of priority area designations on management programs will also be more clearly defined through this review process.

In Chapter 4 (Information Specific to Steelhead), priority areas for steelhead have been listed for each of the seven steelhead ESUs in Oregon. These areas were identified by ODFW biologists and there is a need for further refinement and mapping of the areas. ODFW will take the lead in assembling a workgroup that includes NMFS staff, other scientists, and other appropriate entities with expertise that will help in the process, including representatives from watershed councils, private and industrial landowners, and conservation organizations. The workgroup will provide all interested parties with improved guidance prior to the major season for designing, funding, and implementing habitat restoration projects in 1999 (no later than March 31, 1999).

Through the same process and many of the same persons, plus specialists on salmon, the core area maps for coho, chinook, and chum salmon that were developed for the Oregon Plan (Chapter 15 of March 1997 plan) will also be reviewed prior to the 1999 season. This process was described in Chapter 15 of the March 1997 Oregon Plan, but work load prevented its completion for the 1998 season. Core area maps for coho salmon will be refined and updated as the first priority for salmon. Because of differences from coho in life history patterns and the way chinook and chum salmon utilize their habitat, the workgroup must determine if the chinook and chum salmon core area maps can be updated or should be replaced with a different approach to identifying priority areas. Coastal basins will be given the highest priority by the workgroup, followed by Lower Columbia tributary basins in this salmon core area review.

The effect of priority area designations on management programs will also be more clearly defined through this review process. Currently, some misunderstandings exist regarding the effect of core or priority area designations on activities, including enforcement of habitat protection laws, restoration activities, funding restoration projects, agency monitoring efforts, and fish management. The workgroup will review and more clearly define these and other activities will take priority areas into consideration.