

Coho, sockeye habitat improvements

Comments sought on fish projects

The Chugach National Forest is requesting public comments by Nov. 21 on two proposed fisheries enhancement projects near Milepost 25 of the Copper River Highway near Cordova.

The Cordova Ranger District is asking people to submit suggestions or ideas on what they think about building projects to provide salmon access and improve the spawning and rearing habitat for coho and sockeye in streams and ponds on the Copper River Delta. Both of the proposed projects would increase the number of coho and benefit commercial fishermen on the Copper River flats.

"Constructing the two projects could produce 1,500 or more harvestable adult coho salmon. The

production of sockeye salmon could also be increased," said Kurt Nelson, Cordova District ranger.

The first proposed project is to excavate about 280 feet of new stream channel at Mile 24.75 of the highway and connect an isolated pond to an adjacent salmon stream. This Forest Service project would create another two acres of rearing habitat.

The second project, excavating two 600-foot-long channels, would improve the coho and sockeye spawning areas around Mile 25.25, which often dry out during winter. When the areas go dry, salmon eggs and fry dehydrate and freeze.

Currently, the Mile 25.25 stream system does not produce enough coho

fry to use all the available rearing habitat. Excavating the streambed down far enough would maintain surface water flows year-round.

The second project also would include putting in new gravel where salmon could spawn and the eggs and fry would have a better chance to survive.

Improvements should allow coho salmon to spawn successfully so that the juvenile rearing areas downstream would be used more.

Comments on the rearing access improvement project and the spawning habitat improvement project should be sent to Bob Metzger, Fisheries Biologist, Cordova Ranger District, Box 280, Cordova 99574.