

STEELHEAD RECOVERY PLAN



The Greater Georgia Basin Steelhead Recovery Plan

Wild and hatchery steelhead in 58 of the largest watersheds in the Greater Georgia Basin (from Juan de Fuca Strait north to Johnstone Strait) have experienced serious declines in the last decade, and a majority have been classified as "conservation concern" or "extreme conservation concern" by provincial biologists.

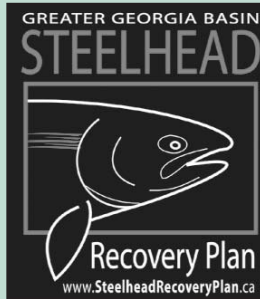
Causes of the Decline

Lower steelhead numbers result from decreased freshwater productivity combined with sharply reduced survival during the ocean phase of their life cycle. The poor ocean conditions are beyond our control and must be balanced by improved freshwater rearing conditions if wild stocks are to survive.

Recovery Objectives

Since the scope of this problem was identified in the late 1990s, provincial fisheries biologists have worked closely with non-government partners, like the BC Conservation Foundation, in developing recovery plans for individual watersheds and steelhead populations. This work led to the release of the Greater Georgia Basin Steelhead Recovery Action Plan in 2002, by A.F. Lill and Associates Ltd., working with the Ministry of Environment under sponsorship of the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

The action plan's primary objective is to stabilize and restore wild steelhead stocks and habitats to healthy self-sustaining levels. A secondary objective is to maintain and restore angling opportunities, which benefit both local communities and the provincial economy.



Recovery Strategies

In 2005/06 steelhead recovery activities on Vancouver Island and in the Lower Mainland received about \$1.3M in direct funding support. An increasing share of annual budgets is being directed to habitat restoration projects including nutrient enrichment, improvement of rearing habitat, placement of spawning gravel, flow augmentation and erosion/ sediment control. Projects now involve an increasing number of rivers with a combination of treatments designed to improve sustainability of the entire fish community, including steelhead. For example, since 2002 rearing habitat has been increased by 19,000 m² through the installation of large woody debris jams in 11 rivers. We have also treated about 725 km of streams with nutrients in 20 watersheds to increase primary productivity and subsequent juvenile fish growth and survival.

More Support Needed

In the coming months, provincial staff and their BCCF partners will work closely with the sport fishing community, conservation and stewardship organizations, First Nations and industry to increase investments in steelhead recovery projects for priority waters within the Greater Georgia Basin. We encourage anglers and non-anglers to support this work which is critical to the preservation of this magnificent species on the south coast.

For more information on the Greater Georgia Basin Steelhead Recovery Plan, visit our web site at www.steelheadrecoveryplan.ca or contact regional fisheries staff in Nanaimo (250-751-3100) or Surrey (604-582-5200).

Advertising