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**Presentation Title: Status of Steelhead in Alaska**

Abstract for the 2018 Pacific Coast Steelhead Management Meeting

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Steelhead *Oncorhynchus mykiss* are found in streams and rivers of coastal Alaska from Cape Muzon in Southeast (SE) Alaska to the Aleutian Peninsula of Southcentral (SC) Alaska at Port Moeller. Most of the known runs are small, containing fewer than 200 adults while the largest population in the Situk River of Southeast Alaska, averages 7 - 9,000 adult kelts. Kodiak Island and the Kenai Peninsula streams in southcentral Alaska also have runs from 200 to several thousand fish. Steelhead spawning in Alaska has been documented at elevations from 2 m in SE Alaska to 1,300 m in the Copper River drainage of SC Alaska. A total of ~ 4,500 km of stream are known to contain steelhead although much area remains to be surveyed. Sport fisheries occur in ~ 20 drainages. Yearly assessments of steelhead adult abundance are limited to 10 selected streams surveyed with snorkel counts, and 6 other streams assessed with weirs. These yearly assessments are done on streams in all of the largest sport fishery areas and are distributed throughout the known range of steelhead in Alaska. For 2016 and 2017 most streams in SE Alaska were at or slightly below average, while SC streams had very high counts or average counts. Length attributes as measured at the Situk River, where the largest fishery occurs, decreased markedly to the smallest on record in 2016 and returned to average in 2017. Two new steelhead research projects have also occurred recently on Kodiak Island (mark recapture) and on the Situk River (scale growth analysis and marine climate). Since 1995 sport fisheries have been conservatively managed with bait restrictions, spawning closures, yearly harvest limits of 2 fish and minimum size limits, or as catch and release only. In 2017 the largest southcentral Alaskan fishery in the Kasilof River was further restricted to catch and release only due to angler preference. Sport fishery catch across the state rose to exceed 20,000 fish in 2015 from a low of 10,155 in 2013 but has not recently achieved the average on 23,000. Sport fishery harvest continues to be low, descending to 65 fish in 2016. Directed commercial fishing for steelhead in Alaska has not occurred since 1995. Incidental harvests in commercial salmon fisheries were reportedly < 300 soon after 1995 but have increased to 860 fish in 2016 with new mandatory reporting requirements for incidental catch that were enacted in 2015. Reported subsistence use of steelhead is rare and remained below 100 fish per year for both 2016 and 2017. Overall resource management policy and regulation in Alaska is focused on preemptive management designed to avoid anthropogenic impacts to steelhead habitats and maintain the current abundance, age, and size attributes of the most heavily used wild steelhead populations.