**Craig Schwanke – Alaska Department of Fish and Game**

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

Abstract for the 2023 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 southwestern Alaska at Port Moeller. Most runs are small, containing fewer than 200 adults while the largest population in the Situk River of Southeast Alaska, averages 7,000 adult kelts. Kodiak Island and the Kenai Peninsula streams in southcentral Alaska also have runs from 200 to several thousand fish. Annual assessments of steelhead adult abundance are limited to 10 streams surveyed with snorkel counts in SE Alaska, and 6 other statewide streams assessed with weirs. These assessments are distributed throughout the known range of steelhead in Alaska. In 2022, most streams in Southeast and Southeast Alaska had below average steelhead counts.

Since 1995, the steelhead sport fishery in Alaska has been conservatively managed with bait restrictions, spawning closures, minimum size requirements, annual harvest limits of 2 fish, or catch and release. Sport fishery catch across the state has decreased to historic lows of less than 8,100 steelhead in 2021 and 2022. Sport fishery harvest is low due to restrictive regulations and angler preference to release steelhead. Directed commercial fishing for steelhead in Alaska has not occurred since 1995. Mandatory reporting requirements of commercial fishery incidental catch was enacted in 2015 and reported harvest has averaged 654 since 2015. Reported subsistence harvest of steelhead in SE Alaska averages 36 fish. Overall steelhead management in Alaska is very conservative and designed to provide sport fishing opportunity while maintaining the stable populations characteristics. Current stock monitoring programs and spread across the Alaskan steelhead range provide managers with timely and consistent information each year to assess broad trends in steelhead productivity.