Alexander Creek Drainage ~Partner Highlights

Pike (Find Elodea listed below)

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) – ADF&G has completed the fourth year of a long-term and large scale annual gillnetting project to control northern pike on Alexander Creek. The intent is to replenish depleted anadromous and resident fish populations and restoring sport fishing opportunities to this once very popular and productive system. Funding extends from 2011 – 2016. As part of the project ADF&G also conducted a radio telemetry study to investigate movement patterns between Alexander Lake and the mainstem of the creek, is looking at diet, and testing effective control and detection methods such as eDNA. Directed by the Management Plan for Invasive Northern Pike and prioritized through a strategic planning process, the northern pike suppression project in Alexander Creek is the largest of its kind ever attempted in Alaska, and preliminary findings from the first four years of this project are encouraging.

Project goals are to create an annual, large scale pike removal protocol on side channel sloughs to remove 80% of pike, track spatial and temporal movement trends of pike to and from Alexander Lake, and measure success, monitor adult salmon returns, resident fish production and juvenile production and movement.

As of spring 2015, results have been very successful. With each year of pike suppression, Chinook fry are found further up the creek system. Chinook salmon returns the last two years have been highest in a decade.

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) – Continuing long term pike suppression efforts in 2015 on adjacent watersheds on the Susitna River that additionally includes examination of seasonal movement patterns, population estimates, and field testing of electronic fish barriers.

Elodea

Although the Mat-Su is the fastest growing region in Alaska, putting increased pressure on the spread of Elodea, much of the Mat-Su is remote and in many cases most readily accessed only by boat or float plane. Alaska's biggest population center - Anchorage is adjacent and regularly utilizes Mat-Su's rich resources, to fish, hunt and recreate. Many Alaskan's fly private aircraft, and there are three lakes currently infested with Elodea that see significant floatplane and motorboat use, vectors that could easily lead to further spread of Elodea. Even a tiny fragment that hitchhikes on boats, trailers, float plane rudders or other gear can establish a new infestation in another waterbody. The Alexander Lake Elodea was very likely spread by floatplane from one of the Anchorage infested lakes. For this reason Elodea outreach, detection, eradication efforts are broader and more regional in scale and by necessity extend outside the Alexander Creek and Mat-Su Basins.

In 2015 & 2016 partners will be working on an eradication plan for Alexander Lake and a rapid response protocol for future infestations, and in 2016 implementing that plan (due to NEPA process, takes significant time and effort to process). Partners will be sampling high priority areas in the Mat-Su, educating priority audiences like pilots, residents of infested lakes, fishermen and guides and will be providing training to help build awareness and create a growing body of residents, recreationalists and practitioners who all can recognize Elodea and know what to do if they do see it. The Mat-Su Salmon

Partnership is working with DNR to develop and help support further future training opportunities as well as an Elodea statewide management plan.

Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) (NFHP FY15 funding) – lead agency and currently working with partners on an eradication plan. Anchorage infestations are scheduled to be treated in the spring of 2015. Meanwhile, ADNR is progressing with writing
appropriate environmental assessments and exploring permits for action. Because the only known infestation in the Mat-Su is localized, and would require only a partial lake eradication effort, ADNR along with other collaborating partners, are hopeful that Mat-Su Elodea eradication is possible!

Tyonek Tribal Conservation District (TTCD) – August 2014 TTCD completed district wide invasive plant survey covering Alexander Creek, Beluga, and Skwentna as well as rivers and roads not previously surveyed. Also surveying for Reed Canary Grass in the Alexander Creek drainage summer 2015.

Palmer Soil and Water Conservation District (PSWC) – Summers 2012 and 2013, surveyed 29 Mat-Su lakes and streams and completed assessment of high priority waterbodies (i.e. locality to roads, structures, and float plane bases).

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) (NFHP funded) – surveyed 11 Susitna River watershed lakes and provided outreach in residential/high traffic boat areas for Elodea in 2014. Returning in 2015 to resample.

Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District (WSWCD) – Summer 2012 surveyed 24 waterbodies, including areas with overpasses and boat launches.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) - Providing outreach, funding, and technical support for Elodea early detection and rapid response efforts in Mat-Su, Kenai, Anchorage, and Fairbanks.
ADF&G – Several field staff crew and project managers have taken Aquatic Invasive Species training that includes information how to identify, survey for, and recognize habitat for elodea. Alexander pike suppression field staff are collaborating with ADNR for sample taking and logistics for Elodea eradication project.