

**DRAFT**

*MARCH 14, 1995*

For immediate release

For further information contact  
Scott Smullen (301) 713-2370 (NMFS)  
Diana Weaver (413) 253-8329 (FWS)

**Atlantic Salmon - Endangered Species Act Protection Not Warranted  
Throughout Entire Historic Range**

**Populations in 11 Maine Rivers Continue to be Studied**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service announced today that they will not propose Endangered Species Act protection for Atlantic salmon throughout its entire historic range in New England. However, the Services are continuing to examine data on Atlantic salmon in seven Maine rivers for possible future listing as endangered, and are seeking more information to determine if salmon in four additional Maine rivers warrant protection under the Act.

MORE

Salmon/2

Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Regional Director Ronald E. Lambertson and National Marine Fisheries Service Acting Northeast Regional Director Jon C. Rittgers said the decision not to list the salmon as endangered comes in response to a petition received in October 1993. The petition asking the Services to designate the salmon as endangered throughout its historic U.S. range was submitted to the Services by RESTORE: The North Woods, Biodiversity Legal Foundation, and Jeffrey Elliott.

"We simply do not feel that salmon throughout the historic range warrants protection under the Act because original stocks were lost from many rivers," Lambertson and Rittgers said. "But at the same time, there is evidence that remnant wild populations exist in seven Maine rivers at or near the northern edge of the U.S. range, so we plan to continue working together to make a determination."

Both the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service are charged with protecting species and distinct population segments of species under the Endangered Species Act. A biological review team composed of staff from both Services conducted a status review of the Atlantic salmon throughout its historic U.S. range, from the Housatonic River in Connecticut north to the St. Croix River on the Maine/Canada border, to determine appropriateness of listing any or all populations.

The Services have determined that the existing wild salmon in seven rivers — the Sheepscot Ducktrap, Narraguagus, Pleasant, Machias, East Machias and Dennys rivers — comprise a distinct population segment of U.S. Atlantic salmon. Available scientific evidence indicates that natural runs of Atlantic salmon in these rivers as a group are both discrete and significant in relation to the remainder of the species.

DRAFT

MORE

## Salmon/3

According to Service officials, ocean harvest, low marine survival, land use practices, inadequate regulatory mechanisms and past hatchery stocking practices are factors that may have contributed to the decline of U.S. Atlantic salmon. Based on a combination of these factors and poor adult returns, the Services have designated the distinct population segment of Atlantic salmon in the seven rivers as a candidate for listing, indicating that the Services have substantial information to support a proposal to list the species as endangered or threatened

Under the Act, an endangered species is likely to become extinct throughout all or a significant portion of its range, while a threatened species is likely to become endangered. Candidate status does not provide protection under the Act, but it does raise the level of awareness of a species' plight.

The Services have found that sufficient information is not available to determine the status of wild Atlantic salmon in Maine's Tunk Stream and the Kennebec, Penobscot and St. Croix rivers. Consequently, the Services will continue to study these populations for possible designation as candidates for protection under the Act.

Wild Atlantic salmon populations south of the Kennebec River were extinct by the mid-1800s; therefore, those rivers were not eligible for protection under the Act. However, current restoration efforts in several of these rivers using hatchery-origin salmon could represent a significant contribution to the U.S. Atlantic salmon resource, Lambertson and Rittgers said

The endangered species evaluation process will continue until a final decision is made on which, if any, populations of salmon qualify for listing under the Act, according to Rittgers and Lambertson. During this time, the Services will discuss potential impacts of any proposed listing and mutual concerns with interested groups.

**DRAFT**

MORE

Salmon/4

Any future announcement of a proposed listing would initiate a 60-to 120-day public comment period. Requests for public hearings can be made within the first 45 days after an announcement. The Services would have up to one year to decide whether or not to make the listing final and publish that decision. If the Services proceed, protective measures of the Act would extend to the species at that time. However, at the present time, the status of Atlantic salmon in all U.S. rivers remains unchanged relative to the Act.

Copies of the Service's Status Review for Anadromous Atlantic Salmon in the United States may be obtained from:

National Marine Fisheries Service  
1 Blackburn Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930

or

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035

- NMFS - FWS

DRAFT