



Tongass National Forest

News Release

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Tongass National Forest to collaborate on critical salmon habitat restoration

\$290,000 rehabilitation project on Sitkoh River starts in 2011

Sitka, AK — Salmon are getting a big boost in Southeast Alaska this year. A series of restoration projects in critical wild salmon habitat on the Sitkoh River will move forward in 2011 thanks to a collaborative commitment by federal and state agencies and conservation groups.

US Forest Service funds in the amount of \$140,000 will be nearly matched by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, which will supply \$108,000 through the Sustainable Salmon Fund. Additional monies have been pledged by both Trout Unlimited, which procured \$25,000 for the project from the Seattle-based Wilburforce Foundation, and the Sitka Conservation Society, which is adding another \$15,000 to the restoration effort.

Located on Chichagof Island, the Sitkoh River watershed was degraded in the past by methods of timber harvest and road construction that are no longer used on the Tongass. The Sitkoh remains a key salmon and steelhead producer.

Greg Killinger, Staff Officer for Fish, Watershed, and Soils on the Forest, points out that the Tongass “produces 30 percent of the wild salmon caught in Alaska from five percent of the land. Acre for acre, the Tongass is America’s wild salmon bread basket.”

Stressing the economic importance of the Sitkoh River restoration, Forest Fish Biologist Sheila Jacobson adds, “Because the Tongass plays such an important role in producing wild salmon and contributing this resource that fuels the regional economy, it is important that our land management efforts sustain, enhance, and restore habitat for salmon.”

Indeed, salmon rehabilitation projects and partnerships are fundamental to how the Sitka Ranger District approaches land management. District Ecosystems Staff Officer Perry Edwards says that while an important goal of the Tongass is to improve habitat in previously degraded areas, the best approach to this kind of restoration is to “work with the people who care about those resources to accomplish those goals.”

The Sitkoh River rehabilitation plan demonstrates just that type of collaboration among the people who care about the Tongass and its resources.

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