

Progress Report - October 29, 1987

Fish Management Plan - Elk Creek

- Management plan adopted by the Commission 1979
- The habitat objective is being met but population data has not been collected.

1979
adopted

FISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

ELK CREEK
(Ecola Creek)

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Fish Division
August 1979

ELK CREEK (Ecola Creek) FISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Elk Creek (Ecola Creek) is a small Pacific Ocean tributary at Cannon Beach (Fig. 1). It contains 17 miles of fish production stream, including 0.5 mile of tidal area, and produces resident and anadromous cutthroat, winter steelhead, and coho salmon. Steelhead and coho have never been stocked; hatchery yearling cutthroat were released prior to 1974. The forks are closed to salmon and steelhead fishing to protect spawning fish. Good basic information is available for Elk Creek because data on cutthroat trout and coho salmon populations have been collected as part of a Department study of streamflow requirements.

Maintenance of water quality, summertime streamflows, riparian vegetation, and prevention of stream channel alterations are key elements in protecting the capability of this stream to sustain natural production of all salmonids.

In July 1979, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission accepted the Department's recommendation to continue to manage Elk Creek for wild fish of all species.

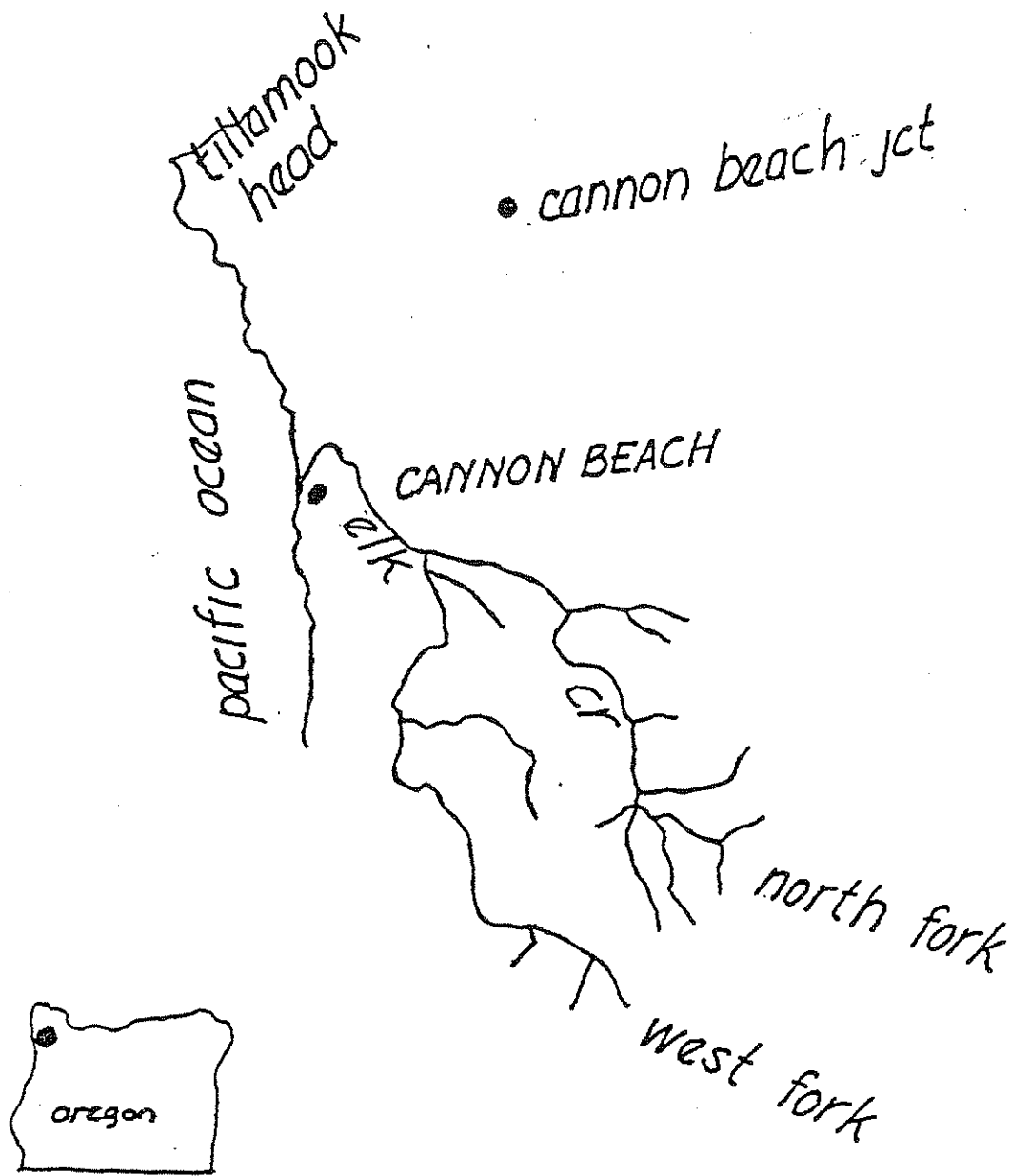
HABITAT

Virtually the entire watershed is privately owned and is being logged. The main stem (1.5 miles in length) averages 40 feet in width. Summer water temperatures in the forks range up to 70 F. Impassable falls are located on the North Fork at RM 1.5 and on the West Fork at RM 2.8. Streamflows fluctuate from 2 to 200 cfs in each of the forks. The riparian vegetation above Highway 101 is in good condition. Spawning gravel in the main stem is limited, but it appears to be adequate in the forks for the existing fish populations. Stream gradient ranges from flat to steep.

TROUT

Populations

Resident and sea-run cutthroat populations are found in the main stream, but impassable falls on both forks limit anadromous fish distribution. Population estimates have not been made where both anadromous and resident trout are found together, but they have been made for the stream areas producing only resident fish. In one area, we estimated 81 cutthroat in 478 lineal feet of stream; a population below those noted in tributaries of Drift Creek, Alsea system. However, Elk Creek sample areas were adjacent to the major access road and would have been more heavily fished than those in Drift Creek where the streams were less accessible.



ELK CREEK

scale 1/2" = 1 mile

Fig. 1. Elk (Ecola) Creek

Fishery

Trout angling pressure is light, and we estimate only a few hundred angler days of use. Vehicle access is limited to a few crossings in the watershed and the road up the stream is closed with a locked gate a short distance above Highway 101.

Trout regulations are: 10 trout 8 inches or over per day, not more than 5 of which may be 12 inches or over, from late May through October, and 2 trout 12 inches or over per day up to the forks during November-December and from January through March.

STEELHEAD

Populations

Native winter steelhead utilize about 5.5 miles of the system including the main stem and lower sections of the two forks. The annual run is estimated to be in the magnitude of 100 to 300 fish. Due to limited production potential, the system is now believed to be adequately seeded and producing at capacity.

Fishery

The main stem up to the forks (1.5 miles) is open to steelhead fishing from late May until the end of March the following year. The bag limit is 2 per day, and there are no special gear restrictions. Fishing for steelhead is not allowed above the forks. This provides about 4 miles of sanctuary waters for spawning fish above the open section of the main stem.

Fishing effort is light and the steelhead harvest is estimated to be less than 50 fish per year with catches occurring from December through March. There is no evidence that the run is overharvested or that any changes in regulations are needed at this time.

SALMON

Populations

Coho salmon production is limited in Elk Creek since they have access to only 5 miles of stream. We estimate the annual run of coho salmon entering the creek does not exceed 275 fish and in most recent years has probably been smaller. A few chum salmon use the stream but the run is small and not consistent.

Elk Creek is closed to the construction of private salmon hatcheries because of the stream's small size, virtual lack of an estuary where such facilities would have to be located, and the social problems which could arise in and around the mouth of the stream where anglers would be attracted to fish returning to the facility.

Fishery

Coho produced in Elk Creek are taken in ocean salmon fisheries off the Pacific coast in common with similar stocks produced elsewhere. A few are caught in the stream when they return to spawn. License information indicates the annual catch of salmon in Elk Creek is less than 20 fish per year.

OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain natural fish production capabilities of the stream by applying existing laws and regulations to protect and improve stream habitat. This largely involves close coordination with private landowners and public agencies controlling the use of water and adjacent land resources and in taking action to stem habitat losses.
2. Assure adequate spawning escapements of all species and maintain populations at optimum levels.
3. Periodically determine size distribution and numbers of cutthroat by sampling the sites used by the Research Section in 1977.