PROGRESS REPORT - October 1987

Fish Management Plan - Neskowin Creek
- Management plan adopted by the Commission 1979

- Status of objectives:
  (1) Being met.
  (2) The only spawning ground counts carried out were for coho.
  (3) Some inventory work was done involving juveniles. However, the data has not been collected on a regular basis.
  (4) Being met.

L2-20/j

1979 adopted

FISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

NESKOWIN CREEK

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Fish Division
August 1979

NESKOWIN CREEK
FISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Neskowin Creek is a small Pacific Ocean tributary containing 23 miles of production waters (Fig. 1) with no estuary. It produces resident and anadromous cutthroat trout, winter steelhead, and coho, fall chinook, and chum salmon. The stream was stocked with hatchery fish in the past but is being managed for wild fish now. It presently receives light angling pressure, but this will probably increase. There are no special angling restrictions.

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 manage Neskowin Creek for wild fish of all species.

HABITAT

Much of the ownership along the main stem of Neskowin Creek is private, but part of the upper watershed is within the Cascade Head Experimental Forest managed by the US Forest Service. The lower 2 miles of stream pass near a golf course, on the south side of the town of Neskowin, and open pastureland before entering timberland.

Stream gradients range from flat to moderately steep. About 9 miles of the main stem average 12 feet in width. High water temperatures are not a limiting factor, but summer streamflows down to 2 cfs have been recorded. Water is withdrawn from the stream by the Neskowin Water District for domestic use. Although the Basin has been logged, riparian vegetation has rapidly recovered and is in relatively good condition. There is only one falls on the main stream and it is passable with high water. Spawning gravel appears adequate for existing fish populations.

TROUT

Populations

Resident and sea-run cutthroat are found throughout the system. No population estimates have been made, but the anadromous portion is probably only a few hundred fish. Annual releases of hatchery yearling cutthroat were ended after 1974.

Fishery

A paved highway parallels Neskowin Creek from Highway 101 upstream to RM 5.5 and a USFS road follows it another mile. Access is limited above that point.

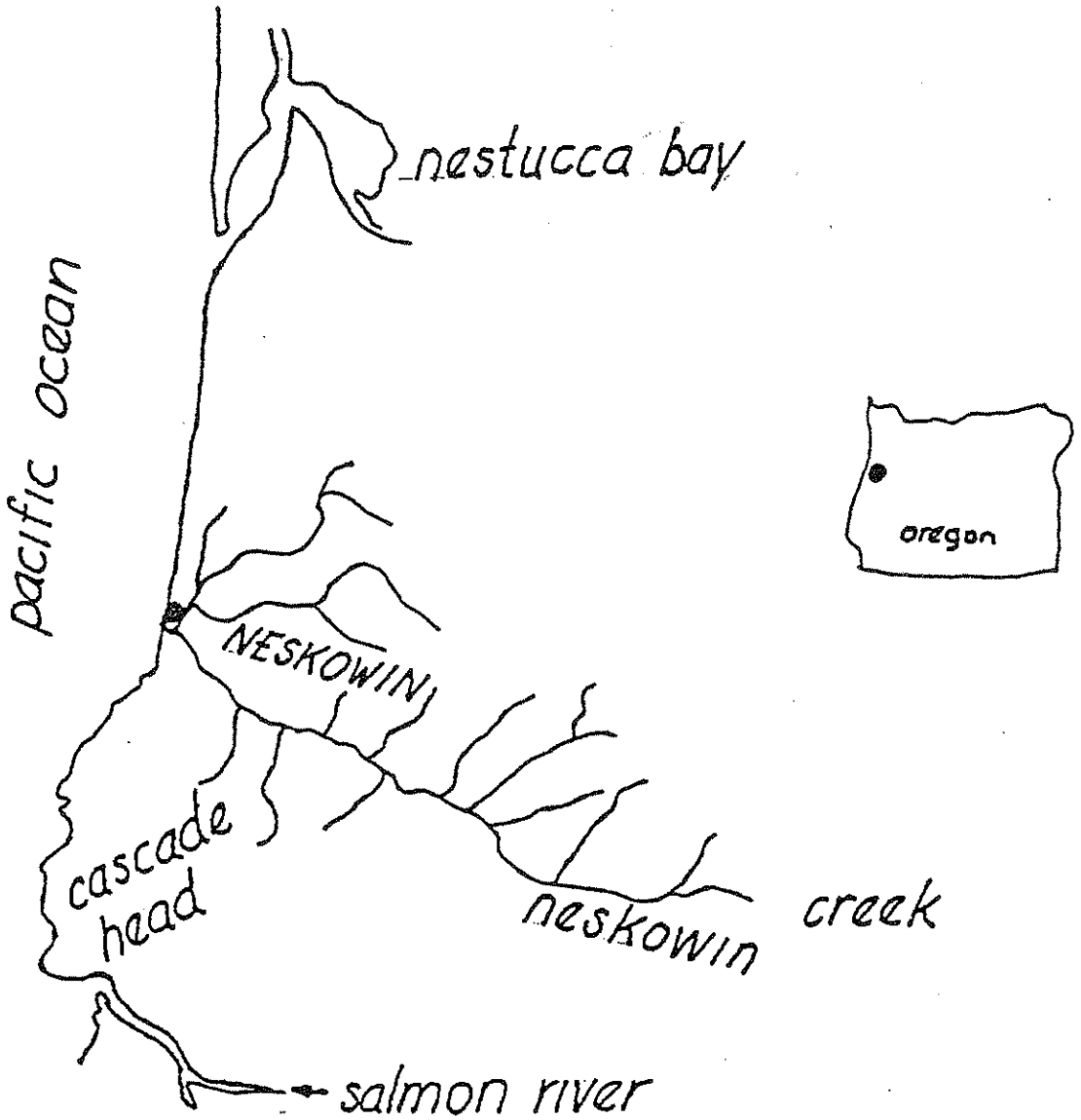

Fig. 1. Neskowin Creek

Angling pressure is light. The small size of resident trout does not appeal to many anglers. Highway 101 now crosses the stream instead of paralleling it as previously, so fewer motorists are aware of the stream.

STEELHEAD

Populations

Neskowin Creek has a small run of native winter steelhead. We stocked hatchery steelhead at irregular intervals from 1949 to 1968; however, fish have not been stocked since 1968. We believe the annual run in the stream varies from about 150 to 400 fish. Steelhead use less than 20 miles of this stream.

Fishery

The creek supports a small steelhead fishery from December through March each year. The entire main stem is open and there are no special regulations. The bag limit is 2 fish per day. During the 1970's, catch estimates have ranged from below 50 to over 100 steelhead per year. We do not believe present fishing pressure or harvest are impacting production levels.

SALMON

Populations

Small runs of coho, fall chinook, and chum salmon spawn in Neskowin Creek each fall. Although routine index surveys of spawning fish are not made, we estimate these runs to be no more than 50 fish each.

The runs rely on natural production as hatchery reared juveniles are not stocked in this stream. Coho use about 21 miles, and chinook and chum use about 4½ miles of stream in the system. The life-history of salmon in Neskowin Creek is probably similar to other midcoast stocks.

The stream is closed by administrative order of the Fish and Wildlife Commission to the construction of private salmon hatchery facilities. This is 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 and US Highway 101 where salmon returning to the facility would congregate.

Fishery

Coho and fall chinook produced in this stream probably contribute to the major ocean salmon fisheries off the Pacific coast in common with similar stocks produced elsewhere. Few salmon are caught in the stream upon their return to spawn; we estimate the combined annual catch of all species is less than 25 fish per year based on salmon-steelhead license information.

OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain natural fish production capabilities of the stream system 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. This objective is important for all species of fish in the system.

2. Maintain spawning escapements at levels necessary for optimum utilization of the fish producing capabilities of the system. We must determine if the available habitat is fully used and appropriate management action to assure the stream is seeded with juveniles to optimum levels.

3. Obtain preliminary population data by sampling representative stream sections. Determine size distribution, numbers, and fish condition.

4. Maintain opportunity for anglers to harvest fish surplus to spawning needs.