Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund
2026 Objectives

Habitat

Habitat restoration methods should focus on restoration of self-sustaining natural ecosystem functions and processes (e.g., re-establishing floodplain connection and function, restoring natural river-channel migration, re-establishing ecologically functional riparian buffers), natural features, and native vegetation. These objectives are not intended to address habitat impacts caused by changes in natural environmental conditions (e.g., changes in stream routes or hydrology caused by beaver activity or shifting glacier streams), or to increase the productivity of systems through nutrient enrichment/fertilization. Preference will be given to projects that benefit salmon populations utilized for subsistence, that conserve areas with a high potential for habitat degradation, that restore or conserve salmon habitat prioritized in climate impact studies, or that restore habitat characteristics identified in climate impact studies as important for resiliency (e.g., restoring vegetative shading to moderate water temperatures).

- Submit nominations to the *Catalog of Waters Important for the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes*

- Restore, maintain, or improve fish passage on water bodies utilized by salmon

- Prepare design & engineering plans for salmon passage restoration projects

- Conduct salmon habitat assessments (e.g., fish passage, invasive species) to evaluate or prioritize restoration or conservation needs

  Fish passage/assessment notes: Final design & engineering plans must be for specific projects (generic designs are not eligible). Applicants are encouraged to utilize U.S. Fish and Wildlife's *Culvert Design Guidelines* for Alaska when designing fish passage restoration projects (https://www.fws.gov/alaska-culvert-design-guidelines) and to consult existing inventories (if applicable) that characterize fish passage conditions (e.g., ADF&G's Fish Passage Inventory Database: https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishpassage.database).

- Conduct salmon habitat restoration scoping or feasibility studies (this may include analysis and consideration of alternatives or recommendations for restoration actions) or develop a restoration or action plan to implement a salmon recovery need

- Eradicate, suppress, or contain invasive species that are known to be detrimental to salmon

  Note: Preference will be given to eradication projects.

  Central Region note: Species of primary concern are northern pike *(Esox lucius),* reed canary grass *(Phalaris arundinacea)*, and waterweed *(Elodea* spp.*).*

Southeast Region note: Species of primary concern are green crab (*Carcinus Maenas*), reed canary grass *(Phalaris arundinacea)*, Japanese knotweed *(Polygonum cuspidatum),* and waterweed *(Elodea* spp.*).*

- Restore instream habitat through bank stabilization, revegetation, or restoration of natural channel structure, morphology, or connectivity

- Produce native seed mixes to replace non-native commercial mixes or create/maintain native plant nurseries for salmon habitat restoration projects

- Reduce or eliminate sediment transport into salmon streams (e.g., with erosion control structures or native plantings)

- Design or maintain a salmon habitat restoration or assessment data system

Monitoring and Assessment

Projects funded under the Monitoring and Assessment category must be necessary for the exercise of subsistence fishing or contribute to sustaining salmon populations utilized for subsistence. Applicants must articulate how the project meets this criterion and <u>one or more</u> of the following conditions:

- *Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (see 5 AAC 01.100-01.760) are not being met (or are at risk of not being met)*
- *The fishery has considerable participation by subsistence users*
- *Harvests in the subsistence fishery have been reduced (or are likely to be reduced) due to an apparent decline in salmon abundance*

Secondary activities (e.g., developing new methods including genetic tools/markers/baselines, conducting retrospective analyses, collecting ancillary data, or conducting outreach activities) are not allowed as standalone projects, but they are allowed as project components if they are necessary to successfully complete the project. Extra scrutiny will be given to projects wherein secondary activities comprise a large portion of the budget. Preference will be given to projects occurring in systems prioritized in climate impact studies.

- Estimate escapement of salmon populations utilized for subsistence

- Estimate abundance of juvenile salmon in populations utilized for subsistence

- Estimate harvest or other sources of mortality of salmon populations utilized for subsistence

- Investigate causes of declines of salmon populations utilized for subsistence

Note: Priority stocks include Stikine sockeye, Chilkat Chinook and sockeye, Copper River Chinook, Tyonek-harvested Chinook, Chignik Chinook and sockeye, Kuskokwim Chinook and chum, Yukon Chinook and chum, and Kotzebue District chum (proposals are not limited to these stocks). Highest priority will be given to stocks for which subsistence harvesting is closed or significantly restricted.

Habitat Resiliency

The intent of this objective is to enable AKSSF to be more strategic about project selection relative to recent and projected changes in climate and environmental conditions with a focus on identifying areas or systems that are expected to be more resilient to these changes. For example, a project could focus on identification of high-value habitats such as cold-water tributaries for conservation or restoration work. Although the objective language is not prescriptive in terms of methods or approaches, projects must provide a substantial and direct benefit for AKSSF project selection within two years of project completion.

Projects proposed under this category must ensure that all data products such as geospatial models are open access and publicly available. For projects that develop a regional or statewide framework, preference will be given to interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate individuals with expertise in salmon ecology, subsistence salmon fisheries, hydrology, population genetics, and climate science. Preference will be given to projects that are inclusive of salmon populations utilized for subsistence.

- Conduct climate impact assessments to guide the selection of future AKSSF projects

  Note: For projects that collect stream temperature data, applicants are advised to follow the data collection standards identified in *Stream temperature data collection standards for Alaska: Minimum standards to generate data useful for regional-scale analyses* (Mauger, Shaftel, Temmell, Geist, Bogan; http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ejrh.2015.07.008). Additionally, temperature data gathered on the project must be uploaded to the Alaska Water Temperature Database (https://aktemp.uaa.alaska.edu/#/).