FORAGE FISHES AND THEIR CRITICAL HABITAT IN THE NEARSHORE ZONE OF THE PUGET SOUND BASIN

KEY POINTS

1. Seasonal forage fish spawning activity is an important ecological feature of a significant portion of the shoreline of the Puget Sound basin (for detailed maps see http://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/gispublic/apps/salmonscape/default.htm).

2. Located in the intertidal/nearshore zone, forage fish spawning habitats are vulnerable to the effects of shoreline usage and development.

3. Preservation of spawning habitats is essential for forage fish preservation.

4. Substantial amounts of forage fish spawning habitat have been degraded or destroyed by the cumulative impact of shoreline usage and development in Puget Sound.

5. All known forage fish spawning habitat sites are currently protected from net loss by specific language in the WDFW Hydraulic Code (WAC 220-110), local shoreline master programs, and critical areas ordinances.

6. Our knowledge of the location and temporal usage patterns of forage fish spawning sites is incomplete. Additional sites continue to be identified, and/or the spawning timeframe more completely described, in on-going surveys.

7. Forage fish spawning habitat preservation cannot depend solely on public acquisition, restoration, or mitigation. Few restoration/mitigation efforts have been rigorously evaluated with regard to long term improvement or replacement of spawning habitat.

8. Given widespread privatization of tidelands in the Puget Sound basin, forage fish spawning habitat preservation will increasingly depend on the application of regulations to private property.

9. Adherence to private property rights must be balanced with effective stewardship and preservation of the public’s forage fish resources and associated critical habitat.

10. The need for public education about forage fish, their critical habitat, and their ecological role is constant to maintain a well-informed citizenry.

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