

# **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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