



Wood R

R. 2630 Wildlife Habitat

DATE May 6, 1982

Subject Summer Steelhead Habitat - 1981 Survey

1281-90548

To Forest Supervisor, Six Rivers N.F.  
ATTN: Jerry Barnes, Forest Fishery Biologist

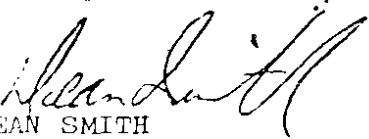
The annual survey of the Bluff Creek summer steelhead population was completed in two phases. The first being a complete survey from the Highway 96 bridge to Louse Camp. This portion was completed in June of 1981. The results led to a resurvey completed the end of July the same summer. This resurvey was done on the lower five miles of Bluff Creek (Wright Ranch to Highway 96 bridge).

The two previous years of survey (1979 and 1980) resulted in sightings of 41 and 37 adults respectively. Those surveys had been completed at later stages of summer (September and October). For the 1981 survey, it was decided to survey earlier in the season to: 1) eliminate possible inclusion of early fall run steelhead in the sample and 2) obtain an estimation of entry time by summers into the Bluff Creek system.

The full survey resulted in a sighting of only 16 adult fish. These fish were isolated individuals spread evenly throughout the survey area. This tends to indicate that entry into the system had occurred some time prior to the survey date. The individuals were moderately bright in color, also indicating some time spent as a fresh water resident. The limited results led to the partial survey a month later. Only 3 adults were counted. This section historically has held 8 to 16 fish the last two years.

To adequately answer the question of whether there is an early mix of fall run fish in September and October or if this year was a low point in the return cycle, a scale sampling program should be initiated. We have too few years of survey data to determine otherwise.

The fish found ranged from 14-28 inches in length and appeared to have high condition factors. They tended to be found underneath rock overhangs and among boulder clusters. Except for specific areas of high deposition, the overall habitat characteristic is one of deep (1/2' - 3') runs and pools (5' - 10'). Very little cover is available in pools due to heavy siltation around the bases of boulders and bedrock walls. The fish do use some white water at the heads of pools for visual cover when disturbed. Available spawning gravel is found throughout the stream channel in small isolated pockets. Rearing habitat is excellent along with high food production levels.

  
DEAN SMITH  
District Biologist



