



Live Plants

SALMONID HABITAT RESTORATION | Fact Sheet

Salmon “imprint” upon a stream before they leave it to migrate to saltwater, and return to it as an adult to spawn. Live planting is a method of returning fish to upstream spawning grounds that have been abandoned over years of habitat destruction.

How it Works

Fish are captured just prior to spawning and transported upstream in pairs to historical spawning grounds. Live plants work best in conjunction with other salmon restoration programs, such as nutrient enhancement and habitat rehabilitation.

- Choose the best habitat you can find.

While appropriate habitat is important, to a large extent salmon will build their own habitat—adults move gravel into location and over generations create good spawning grounds.

- Make sure juvenile fish will have clear, unobstructed access downstream when they migrate to saltwater, and sufficient passage upstream when they return as adults to spawn.

- Plant as many live pairs as you can get. The greater the population that spawns in a location, the greater the chance of successful returns. Greater numbers of returning adults also mean higher levels of nutrients in the water, crucial to juvenile survival.

- Choose a plant location where the truck carrying the tank can reach close enough to the stream to extend the pipe in the water. As long as the water level is high enough for fish to move, they’ll find the best habitat in the area for spawning.

Once fish have been live planted in a new area, the site is monitored to ensure the plant was successful. Identify a location.

What You’ll Need

In order to successfully transport fish you’ll need the following:

- Transport container. These containers fit in the back of a truck to enable capture fish to be immediately relocated upstream, and are oxygenated to keep the fish alive.
- PVC pipe. Pipes must be large enough in diameter to fit the tank’s outtake and to allow mature salmon to fit, and long enough to reach the stream from the truck.
- Hatchery assistance. Hatchery biologists can help ensure the safety and proper handling of the fish, as well as provide the necessary permits. In addition, they’ll capture the fish, and can provide the proper equipment.

For more detailed information see the related How-To Guide, “Live Plants.”

Copies of this document are available through Fish First, and can be found on the Web at www.fishfirst.org. You’ll also find a library of how-to guides and fact sheets as well as other resources and information to help with salmon restoration projects made possible in part by grants from:



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