

# Start Saving Salmon

By Cooper Jewell

Did you know that there are salmon in Odiak Pond? We need your help to protect one of our town salmon spawning grounds. Last year the 7th grade class, working with the Copper River Watershed Project, found Coho (silver) in Odiak Pond. Through their efforts, Odiak Pond was added to the State of Alaska's Anadromous Waterways Catalog. This year the 7th grade class has confirmed that there are Coho (silver) in Odiak pond, but, they are in danger. The culverts the salmon use are too high, making it hard for the salmon to get in and out of the pond. Also Cordovan's add pollutants to the pond through when it rains all of the trash from the road goes into Odiak Pond, making it harder for the salmon to survive.

Some people don't even know where Odiak Pond is. Odiak Pond is the pond by the hospital, where the board walk and gazebo are, right by the grassy field. This year the 7th grade class monitored the water quality of the pond throughout the year. We also set fish traps in April with local scientists and found several Coho fry and one smolt.

The salmon in Odiak Pond have to work really hard to get there, to spawn and then get back out to the ocean. The culverts that go under the road are above the water level, which only rises all of the way up to the culverts at high tide. The salmon have to jump up and then swim through shallow water or not make it at all. It is looking like the fry and smolt we found don't seem to have a chance at making it through the culverts this year with such low water because of low snowmelt and rainfall this winter. If we

lowered the culverts it would make it so much easier for the salmon to get through the culverts and then the population in the pond could be better sustained.

In addition to the culvert problem, there is also a lot of trash and pollution in Odiak Pond. Over the six months that we monitored Odiak Pond, we found 395 pieces of trash; including a trash can, 89 plastic wrappers, two spray cans, and a lot more. That was just in six months and the trash that we found was on top of the snow, at spring clean up we found almost twenty bags of trash including four bags and big tarps around where the salmon actually spawn.

A third problem is how we are impacting the water in Odiak Pond. At one spot, we found iron rich water bubbling out of the ground. potentially from a natural source, the old landfill, or old rail road activities around the pond. If you go to Odiak Pond, near the walkway next to the hospital you will see an area that is covered by a copper-colored slime, which is iron. A small amount of iron is good for the ecosystem because it is an important nutrient for plants, but too much can be toxic for the plants and other organisms. In addition to the iron, when the snow plows push all of the snow from the hospital parking lot, all of the oil from cars that leaked onto the road gets pushed into the pond. During our monitoring we saw evidence of this as a large oil sheen melted into the pond below the plowed snow.

Odiak Pond and it's inhabitants are being threatened by trash, oil, raised culverts and potentially to much iron. If we can get the culvert's lowered and clean up the pond I have a feeling that the Odiak pond salmon population will not only prosper but be present for generations of fishermen to come.





Where the oil  
is