

Snake Basin Hatchery and Harvest Management Coordination: Tools For Building Consensus

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The 31 extant wild populations of spring and summer Chinook salmon in the Snake River Basin experienced significant declines following construction of dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers and were listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. To mitigate for lost natural production, state, federal, and tribally operated hatchery programs in the Snake River Basin produce 12 million spring/summer Chinook smolts annually with many thousands of those PIT tagged for research and management purposes. Tribal, state, and federal interjurisdictional management of fisheries for conservation of natural populations, sharing of harvestable returns and ESA take, trapping of hatchery broodstocks, and distribution of fish trapped in excess of brood needs is extremely complex. In an effort to better coordinate hatchery and harvest management, agencies in the basin have implemented a structured pre-season planning, inseason coordination, post season review and evaluation process, and PIT tags play a key role in that process. Weekly inseason coordination teleconferences where run projections, harvest estimates, and hatchery trapping and broodstock collection data are exchanged are particularly important to successful resource management in the basin. This presentation describes the coordination effort that's occurring through weekly information and planning, and internet-supported teleconferences. These coordination efforts have helped significantly to break down traditional communication barriers between harvest managers and hatchery managers within and among tribal, state, and federal management agencies in the Snake Basin.