

PRESENTATION FACTSHEET

Presentation Title: Spring Chinook Conservation Hatchery

Date: 1/11/2024

Board Approval Needed: Discussion

Presenters: Nat Kale

Background Materials:

Previous Presentation(s): Yes

Previous Material(s) Links:

Date(s) of Presentation: 1/7/2021

<https://www.ezview.wa.gov/DesktopModules/Documents2/View.aspx?tabID=37068&alias=1962&mid=71500&ItemID=16052>

Previous Board Action(s) Taken: Discussion

Key Points for Spring Chinook Conservation Hatchery

- A conservation-focused hatchery could be one important step for preserving the important spring Chinook run in the Chehalis Basin.
- Hatcheries usually balance production and conservation goals. There is at least one example of a spring Chinook conservation-focused hatchery in Washington.
- Co-manager conversations on this complex topic are starting and can inform whether next steps to evaluate a spring Chinook hatchery, informed by engagement with other stakeholders including the Board, are warranted.
- Hatcheries are part of the “All-H” work the Board has queued up in the long-term Strategy development process.

Preserving Chehalis Spring Chinook

Spring Chinook are a culturally and economically important run of salmon in the Chehalis Basin. Their numbers are severely diminished since pre-European settlement of the Basin, and modeling indicates the possibility of loss of the run in the coming years and decades. This Board’s primary means of addressing spring Chinook abundance and productivity in the Basin has been habitat improvement through the Aquatic Species Restoration Program (ASRP). Complimentary approaches for perpetuating the species could include establishing a hatchery focused on conservation and preservation of the run.

Conservation Hatcheries in Washington

The creation and management of hatcheries in Washington State is directed by the co-managers – Tribes with treaty rights and WDFW. In many cases hatcheries are operated for supplementation purposes, to increase the number of harvestable fish, and are in some cases legally required to compensate for loss of spawning habitat due to dam construction. Modern hatchery practices (WDFW policy C-3624) also underscore the need to include conservation goals, to reduce the potential impact of hatcheries on wild runs. Hatcheries can also play an important role in some aspects of wild salmon recovery. Statewide, a relatively small number of hatcheries (a little over 20) are involved in recovery actions for 20 currently-listed ESA stocks, and are operated primarily for conservation purposes, to reduce the risk of genetic loss and extirpation of threatened and endangered runs. The Cle Elum Supplementation and Research Facility is one such hatchery operated by the Yakama Nation that aims to increase fish (including spring chinook) abundance while maintaining strong genetics.

Co-Managers Lead

Scientists do not all agree about the potential benefits and drawbacks of a conservation hatchery. The politics around establishing a hatchery are also complex. The co-managers would have to lead conversations to establish agreement on whether a spring Chinook hatchery is advisable for the Chehalis Basin in addition to other elements, such as sourcing broodstock, siting, management, etc. Other key stakeholders in the basin can help provide input to these discussions. OCB and the Board could help convene discussions and help fund key actions when appropriate.

Initial input from co-managers suggests that there are considerable issues to resolve in the near term before a decision could be made about pursuing a conservation hatchery.

Long-Term Strategy

Hatcheries are an element of the “All-H” work the Board has asked OCB staff to pursue as part of the long-term strategy development process. OCB and WDFW staff are developing a comprehensive approach to addressing the range of All-H options, including hatcheries broadly and a conservation hatchery for spring chinook specifically. That memorandum will be presented to the Board for discussion in April 2024.

The Board may wish to consider engaging with comanagers on a conservation-focused spring Chinook hatchery in the context of the other Hs – hydropower, harvest, predation, and other potential impacts to salmonids outside of habitat.

Presenter Follow Up Actions:

OCB staff plan to reach out to WDFW, QIN, and experts in hatcheries and develop a memorandum summarizing high-level issues and potential next steps to bring to the Board. If the Board wishes to pursue a conservation focused spring Chinook hatchery before other "All-H" actions, OCB staff could prepare a memorandum by February. Alternatively, OCB staff could gather materials by April to complement and enhance the All-H memorandum already in development.