



COLUMBIA RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION

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July 11, 2011

Chairman Doc Hastings
House Natural Resource Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Mike Simpson
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Frank Wolf
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
H-309 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Chairmen Hastings, Simpson and Wolf:

At the direction and on behalf of the member tribes of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, I ask your leadership to forge a policy and appropriations linkage on salmon hatchery management in the Columbia River Basin. The full potential of the dual hatchery purposes, mitigation and recovery, are compromised by federal law requiring “mass-marking” of hatchery-produced fish.

Federal funding for hatcheries is formulated by two Appropriations Subcommittees: House Commerce, Justice, Science and Related agencies; and Interior, Environment and Related Agencies. CRITFC Commissioner N. Kathryn “Kat” Brigham, testifying on May 4th before Chairman Simpson’s House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, urged the subcommittee to review and reconsider appropriations requiring salmon “mass-marking” programs. It stands to reason that the Natural Resources Committee has jurisdiction for oversight of the authorizing legislation and for coordination with Appropriators.

Use of Salmon Hatcheries for Natural Stock Recovery

The Commission member tribes’ approach to salmon recovery is to put fish back in to the rivers and protect the watersheds where fish live. Hatcheries can be used as a very effective tool to increase naturally spawning populations of salmon using biologically appropriate hatchery fish (called supplementation). Evidence of this approach is seen by the increasing returns of salmon in the Columbia River Basin, even above eight (8) dams.

Success Stories

Wild spring chinook salmon are returning in large numbers in the Umatilla, Yakima and Klickitat tributaries. Coho in the Clearwater River are now abundant after Snake River

coho were declared extinct. Fish are returning to the Columbia River Basin and it is built on more than thirty years of tribal projects that incorporate hatchery fish and wild fish on the spawning grounds.

In the Snake River Basin, fall chinook has been brought back from the brink of extinction. Listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, the estimated return of naturally-spawning Snake River fall chinook averaged 328 adults from 1986-1992. In 1994, fewer than 2,000 Snake River fall chinook returned to the Columbia River Basin. Fall chinooks are rebounding thanks to the Nez Perce Tribe's modern supplementation program. Snake River fall chinooks are well on their way to recovery. Over 40,000 fall chinook made it past Lower Granite Dam in 2010. Over 10,000 of those fish were wild, nearly twice the previous record return since the dam was constructed in 1975.

Expand Supplementation Programs Further

Mass marking programs prioritize allocation over recovery, primarily benefitting mark selective non-Indian fisheries. These kinds of programs result in wild fish mortalities and are not a recovery program. The tribes would like to expand hatchery supplementation programs, but most of the available hatchery space and funding is set aside for mass marking and selective fisheries programs.

We ask that Columbia Basin mass-marking programs, and correlated funding, be reviewed for compatibility with our overall objective of ESA delisting and with prevailing law and agreements: *US v Oregon*, Pacific Salmon Treaty and the Columbia Basin Fish Accords. The CRITFC member tribes remain ready and willing to participate in any review.

We ask that any new "Hatchery Reform" funding prioritize tribal supplementation programs.

We also ask that all hatchery reforms make active progress towards ESA delisting and full recovery.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and concerns. If you have any questions please contact Charles Hudson, Director of Government Affairs, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission at (503) 731-1257.

Respectfully,



Bruce Jim
Chairman

Cc: Representative Chaka Fattah, Ranking Member CJS
Representative James Moran, Ranking Member Interior
Representative Edward Markey, Ranking Member Natural Resources