

Environmental Assessment for Codifying Recreational Fishing at Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery

August 2019

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to evaluate the effects associated with this proposed action and complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1509) and Department of the Interior (43 CFR 46; 516 DM 8) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (550 FW 3) regulations and policies. NEPA requires examination of the effects of proposed actions on the natural and human environment.

Proposed Action:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing to codify recreational fishing opportunities for Largemouth Bass, Pacific Salmon, Rainbow Trout, Steelhead, White Sturgeon, Yellow Perch and other cool water fish species on the Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery (NFH) in accordance with the Spring Creek NFH Fishing Plan. This action will codify bank fishing on the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers. Approximately 18.8 acres of the hatchery's 89.57 acres will be made officially open to the general public for recreational fishing. Access to these fish opportunities will also be facilitated by officially allowing public vehicle use of the Main Hatchery Area access road and walking access to the White Salmon River through the Big White Ponds Area.

This proposed action is often iterative and evolves over time during the process as the agency refines its proposal and learns more from the public, Tribes, and other agencies. Therefore, the final proposed action may be different from the original. The final decision on the proposed action will be made at the conclusion of the public comment period for this EA.

Background:

National Fish Hatcheries are guided by the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020 (USFWS 2016), the mission and goals of the National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS), the authorized purposes of an individual hatchery, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy, laws and international treaties.

The Spring Creek NFH consists of the Main Hatchery Area in Skamania County, Washington and the nearby auxiliary Big White Ponds Area in Klickitat County, Washington. Both sites are contained within the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area and the State of Washington's Wind – White Salmon Water Resources Inventory Area (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the general area around Spring Creek NFH. The hatchery's location is denoted by the red star.

Spring Creek NFH's main facility is located at RM 167 along the north (Washington) shore of the Columbia River, 20 miles upstream of Bonneville Dam and approximately two miles downstream of the White Salmon River (Figure 2). The auxiliary Big White Ponds Area is located along the eastern shore of the White Salmon River approximately 1.5 miles upstream of the Columbia River confluence (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Aerial view of the Main Hatchery Area of Spring Creek NFH with fishing areas denoted.

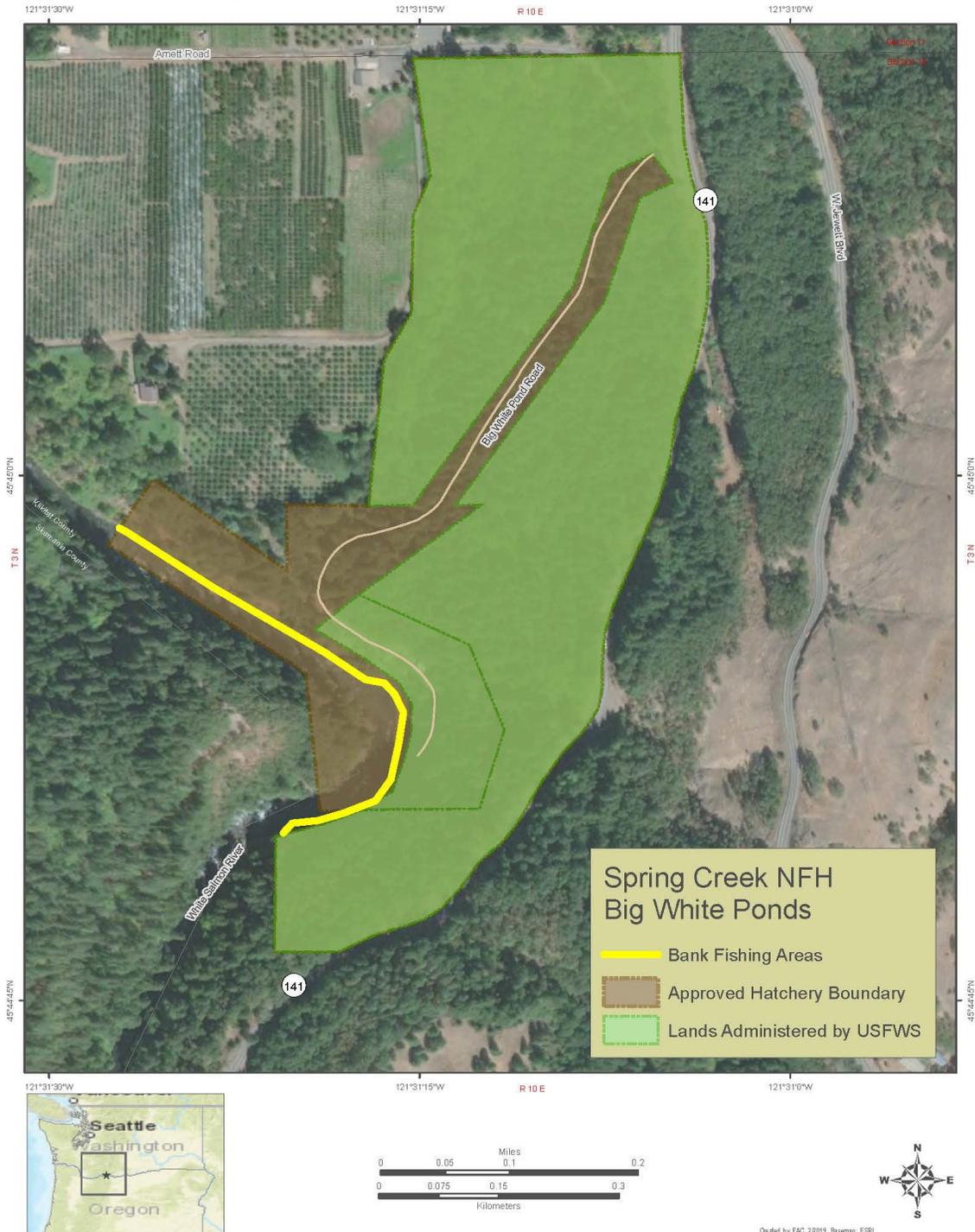


Figure 3. Aerial view of the auxiliary Big White Ponds of Spring Creek NFH with fishing areas denoted

The facility was authorized by Special Act 24 Stat. 523, March 03, 1887, and Special Act 30 Stat. 612, July 01, 1898, and placed into operation in September 1901 to support the commercial fishing industry in the Columbia River. The hatchery was reauthorized by the Mitchell Act (16 USC 755-757; 52 Stat. 345) May 11, 1938, as amended on August 8, 1946, (60 Stat. 932) for mitigation of Bonneville Dam and conservation of fishery resources in the Columbia River Basin. The hatchery was remodeled in 1938 to prevent inundation by the pool behind Bonneville Dam. The hatchery was again remodeled in 1970 to expand operations to meet commitments under the John Day Dam Mitigation Act. The hatchery is currently propagating Tule fall Chinook salmon and includes adult broodstock collection, egg incubation, juvenile rearing, and an annual on-station release of 15.1 million sub-yearling smolts.

National Fish Hatchery lands are maintained for the fundamental purpose of propagating and distributing fish and other aquatic animal life and managed for the protection of all species of wildlife (50 CFR Ch.1 70.1).

Spring Creek NFH has provided fishing opportunities to the public since its establishment in 1901 and long before current environmental policies and regulations were promulgated. This document serves to retroactively and officially open Spring Creek NFH lands to public fishing via the Code of Federal Regulations. These action will ensure that all legal and policy obligations are met. Additionally, it is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the hatchery was established and the mission of the NFHS.

Historically and presently, Spring Creek NFH lands and have provided a multitude of fishing opportunities to the general public. Many rod and reel anglers use the banks of hatchery lands to pursue Largemouth Bass, Pacific Salmon, Rainbow Trout, Steelhead, White Sturgeon, Yellow Perch and other cool water fish species.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The primary purpose of this proposed action is to codify compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities on Spring Creek NFH. The need of the proposed action is to meet the requirements of Secretarial Order 3347 involving “identifying specific actions to expand access significantly for recreational hunting and fishing on public lands as may be appropriate”.

The objective of fishing program at the Spring Creek NFH is to provide:

- The public with a recreational opportunity to experience fishing on public hatchery land and increase opportunities for anglers, especially for youth and families.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative A (Preferred Alternative): Fishing access would continue on Spring Creek NFH as it has for the last 118 years.

Alternative B: Fishing access would be terminated after 118 years at Spring Creek NFH.

Affected Environment

The Columbia River Gorge is a canyon of the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest of great scenic and recreational value, hence its designation as a National Scenic Area. The canyon is up to 4,000 feet deep and stretches over 80 miles from the eastern reaches of the Portland metropolitan area to roughly the confluence of the Columbia with the Deschutes River, along the way bisecting the Cascade Range. The river and gorge form the boundary between the states of Washington to the north and Oregon to the south.

Spring Creek NFH lands consist primarily of relatively intact prairie-oak habitats that are quite rare within the Columbia River Gorge. These habitats are dominated by Oregon white oak, but also have ponderosa pine, California black oak, Douglas-fir, and canyon live oak. In general, the understory is relatively open with shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. The tree canopy of these oak woodlands obscures 30-70 percent of the sky. Oak habitats are typically maintained through periodic, low-intensity fire, which removes small conifers and maintains a moderate cover of low shrubs.

Tables 1-6 provide additional, brief descriptions of each resource present in the vicinity of Spring Creek NFH.

Environmental Consequences of the Action

This section analyzes the environmental consequences of the action on each affected resource, including direct and indirect effects. This EA only includes the written analyses of the environmental consequences on a resource when the impacts on that resource could be more than negligible and therefore considered an “affected resource”. Any resources that will not be more than negligibly impacted by the action have been dismissed from further analyses.

Tables 1-5 provide:

1. A brief description of the affected resources in the proposed action area;
2. Impacts of the proposed action and any alternatives on those resources, including direct and indirect effects.

Table 6 provides a brief description of the cumulative impacts of the proposed action and any alternatives.

Impact Types:

- *Direct effects* are those which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.
- *Indirect effects* are those which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable.
- *Cumulative impacts* result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions.

TABLE 1. AFFECTED NATURAL RESOURCES AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ANY ALTERNATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES		
AFFECTED RESOURCE	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Largemouth Bass, Pacific Salmon, Rainbow Trout, Steelhead, White Sturgeon, and Yellow Perch</p> <p>Largemouth Bass, Rainbow Trout, and Yellow Perch are widely popular game fish species that are widely pursued throughout the country. Their populations are generally resilient with respect to typical fishing pressure.</p> <p>Historically, adult salmon returns to the Columbia Basin were at least 10 to 16 million fish annually. Today, across the Northwest, less than 5 percent of historic populations of wild salmon and steelhead return to local rivers and streams.</p> <p>Total estimated abundance of White Sturgeon of all sizes in the Bonneville pool in 2015 was 191,893. The population trend is pretty flat with some small increases, probably as the result of high spring flows in some years. The population is composed of older, larger fish and not as many juveniles as would be expected in an unimpounded reach of the Columbia River (NPCC 2018).</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on fish populations should be relatively insignificant. Fishing activities have taken place at this facility for over 118 years and fish population levels have varied widely during this period based on climate change, dam construction, water withdrawals, dredging, and a host of other extensive habitat modifications. Actual data though are lacking because the Service does not regulate fisheries in state waters and therefore has no standing to conduct creel surveys or other angler surveys. The Washington Department of Fish and Game (WDFG) does have the standing to enumerate angler use and catch, but does not deem the Spring Creek NFH fishery of enough significance to which to dedicate scarce resources, therefore no data are available for this analysis.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially increase the numbers of fished species in the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers, but these increases would likely be insignificant. The proportion of anglers using Spring Creek NFH to access the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers appears to be minuscule based on staff observations, so access restriction would have little effect.</p>

AFFECTED RESOURCE	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Other Wildlife and Aquatic Species</p> <p>The hatchery supports a diversity of wildlife species of the Columbia Gorge, including game and nongame species, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates, which are important contributors to the overall biodiversity on the hatchery. Songbirds, raptors, shorebirds and waterfowl primarily utilize the hatchery as wintering and migratory habitat.</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on wildlife and other aquatic species should be relatively insignificant. Fishing activities have taken place at this facility for over 118 years and populations of wildlife and aquatic species have varied widely during this period primarily due to major habitat alterations within the Columbia River Basin.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially increase the numbers of wildlife and aquatic species, but these increases would likely be insignificant. Though the actual level of angler use is not known, direct observation suggests that increases or decreases in public access would result in trivial changes to this resource.</p>
<p>Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Special Status Species</p> <p>Threatened Lower Columbia River Chinook Salmon, specifically those of the hatchery's Tule Chinook Program, are present in the adjacent Columbia River and White Salmon Creek, and at times held within hatchery facilities.</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on threatened and endangered species and other special status species should be relatively insignificant. Fishing activities have taken place at this facility for over 118 years and populations of threatened and endangered species and other special status species have varied widely primarily due to major habitat alterations within the Columbia River Basin.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially increase the numbers of threatened and endangered species and other special status species, but these increases would likely be insignificant. Though the actual level of angler use is not known, direct observation suggests that increases or decreases in public access would result in trivial changes to this resource.</p>
<p>Vegetation (including vegetation of special management concern)</p> <p>Main Hatchery Area: Vegetation encompasses shrubby and herbaceous communities, as well as forested communities with varying canopy types. Scattered ponderosa pine and Oregon white oak are the main woodland species. Among the common forest understory plants are common snowberry, Oregon grape, rose, trailing blackberry, and western hazel.</p> <p>Big White Ponds Area: Native vegetation is scattered Oregon white oak, antelope bitterbrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, elk sedge, lupine, and eriogonum.</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on vegetation should be relatively insignificant. Fishing activities have taken place at this facility for over 118 years and the areas open to fishing have been disturbed for at least that long. Most areas open to fishing have been maintained in a park-like setting from the facility's beginning, so while they reflect natural vegetation types, some vegetative elements may have been eliminated to facilitate maintenance. Public use of the open areas certainly impacts the amount and coverage of vegetation, but on a very small scale (i.e., trampling of vegetation, use of vegetation to</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially increase the amount and coverage of natural vegetation since public impacts (i.e., trampling of vegetation, use of vegetation to assist with fishing, creation of social trails, etc.) would be reduced, but these increases would likely be insignificant. Furthermore, these areas would most likely continue to be maintained in a park-like setting, so complete reversion to some historical state is not expected. Though the actual level of angler use is not known, direct observation suggests that increases or decreases in public access would result in trivial changes to this resource.</p>

	assist with fishing, creation of social trails, etc.).	
AFFECTED RESOURCE	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Geology & Soils</p> <p>The soils of the Main Hatchery Area are predominantly in the Rock outcrop-Xerorthents complex, 50 to 90 percent slopes. This map unit is on back slopes and escarpments of mountains and is composed of about 65 percent Rock outcrop and 25 percent Xerorthents. Included in this unit are small areas of McElroy, Skoly, and St. Martin soils on landslides. The Xerorthents are shallow to deep and are well drained. They formed in colluvium derived dominantly from basalt, andesite, and some volcanic ash. No single profile is typical of Xerorthents, but one commonly observed in the survey area has a surface layer of very dark grayish brown gravelly loam 6 inches thick. The upper 13 inches of the underlying material is dark brown very gravelly loam, and the lower part to a depth of 31 inches is brown extremely gravelly clay loam over bedrock. Depth to bedrock ranges from 10 to 60 inches. Rock outcrop consists of exposed areas of dominantly basalt and andesite (Haagen 1990).</p> <p>The soils of the auxiliary Big White Ponds Area are predominantly of the Oreoke-Beeze Complex, 30 to 70 percent slope. This complex consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in colluvium derived from basalt mixed with loess. Oreoke soils are on canyon side slopes and hillslopes. Slopes are 15 to 75 percent. The mean annual precipitation is about 18 inches and the mean annual temperature is about 48° F (Brincken 2009).</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on geology and soils should be insignificant. Geology and soils were likely impacted during the initial construction phase and during subsequent major construction activities, but relatively light public access on such a robust resource should be minimal, if not negligible.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially decrease impacts on geology and soils; however, the robust nature of these resources suggests that eliminating this level of public access would have minimal, if not negligible impacts.</p>

AFFECTED RESOURCE	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Air Quality</p> <p>According to the Washington Department of Ecology website, the county around the main hatchery ranked in the 90th percentile for emissions of carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides, in the 50th percentile for volatile organic compound emissions, and in the 10th percentile for sulphur dioxide emissions and air quality index. The scale runs from 0-100, with the lower percentiles representing the cleanest or best counties in the U.S. and the higher percentiles representing the dirtiest or worst.</p> <p>The county around the Big White Ponds Area ranked in the 70th percentile for emissions of carbon monoxide, in the 60th percentile for sulphur dioxide emissions, in the 40th percentile for volatile organic compound emissions, and in the 30th percentile for nitrogen oxide emissions and air quality index.</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on air quality should be insignificant. Emissions resulting from a relatively small number of angler vehicles would likely be undetectable in relation to the extremely large amount of vehicle emissions associated with State Highway 14 and Interstate 84, the two major thoroughfares in the vicinity.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially decrease impacts on air quality; however, the extremely large amount of vehicle emissions associated with State Highway 14 and Interstate 84 would far overshadow any emissions associated with angler access reduction.</p>
<p>Water Resources</p> <p>Although the area is relatively sparsely populated, Water Resources Inventory Area 29 is among the most densely farmed basins in southwestern Washington. Furthermore, expected population increases, particularly in the city of Stevenson, combined with growing tourism from the burgeoning urban centers of Vancouver and Portland, have put a strain on the region's water resources (WDE 2011).</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on water resources should be insignificant. Water use by a relatively small number of anglers would likely be undetectable in relation to the large amount of domestic, agricultural and industrial use in the area.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially decrease impacts on water resources; however, water use by a relatively small number of anglers would likely be undetectable in relation to the large amount of domestic, agricultural and industrial use in the area.</p>

AFFECTED RESOURCE	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Wetlands</p> <p>Outside of small linear wetlands associated with the margins of the Columbia and White Salmon River, there are no significant wetland areas on the Spring Creek NFH.</p>	N/A	N/A
<p>Floodplains</p> <p>There is very little floodplain associated with hatchery lands along the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers.</p>	N/A	N/A

TABLE 2. AFFECTED VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ANY ALTERNATIVES

VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
AFFECTED RESOURCE	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Recreational Fishing</p> <p>Recreational fishing is a popular sport on the Columbia River and the White Salmon River. Anglers use the main hatchery road to access fishing along the north bank of the Columbia River. The area has approximately one mile of shoreline where fishing can take place.</p> <p>Anglers are prohibited from entering the Big White Ponds Area via motorized vehicle due to the lack of parking near the river, and the slope and rugged nature of the road. A sign at the entrance gate clearly states that no public vehicles are allowed. Anglers can walk from the gate (about ¼ mile)</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts of codifying an activity that has been taking place for over 118 years is insignificant. The public is completely unaware of such procedural requirements and couldn't care less as long as their access to a fishing experience is not interrupted.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH would likely increase impacts on a small but vocal community of recreational anglers. There would likely be some local outcry, but overall the impact would be minimal given the relatively small number of anglers using the hatchery property for access when compared to the large number of anglers using other access points on the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers.</p>

<p>to reach the White Salmon River. The hatchery owns approximately 2,100 feet of shoreline. There are structures that may inhibit fishing in some spots and the public is cautioned to avoid them.</p>		
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TABLE 3. AFFECTED CULTURAL RESOURCES AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ANY ALTERNATIVES

CULTURAL RESOURCES	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
AFFECTED RESOURCE	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>The Lewis and Clark expedition descended the Columbia River in the fall of 1805, passing the mouth of the White Salmon River and observing the heavily timbered slopes and abundant fishery, with fishing camps dotting the river on both sides. The anadromous fish supplied a steady food source and trade commodity for the Native Americans. Euro-American settlers arriving in the Pacific Northwest in the mid-nineteenth century viewed the anadromous fish as an inexhaustible economic resource. The Spring Creek NFH was built in 1901 on the north shore of the Columbia River to address declining fish populations; it was forced to move in 1938 to an upper manmade terrace above the reservoir pool when the Bonneville Dam was constructed. In the 1940s, circular ponds were installed at the current Spring Creek NFH as an experiment. In 1949, Quarters #1 was constructed for hatchery staff, followed by additional housing and a hatchery building and garage in the early and mid-1950s. In 1972 the hatchery was essentially rebuilt with several banks of raceways to replace the circular ponds along with a new office and spawning shed. The 1950s</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on cultural resources should be insignificant. The general public’s primary focus is on fishing, not searching for and disturbing cultural resources. As a result, the vast majority of anticipated impacts would likely be accidentally and trivial. Savy persons would have access to a number of cultural resources, so there is potential for disturbance and pilfering.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH would likely decrease impacts on cultural resources. Those wishing to disturb or pilfer these resources would be easier to detect and apprehend. Overall though it is anticipated that eliminating public access would have relatively minimal impacts on cultural resources.</p>

hatchery buildings were also renovated. The Lower Columbia River Fish Health Center Lab (LCRFHCL) began operating in conjunction with the hatchery and in 1988 moved into the manager's residence. Based on the records on file at the USFWS Cultural Resources Team office, four cultural resource identification efforts have been conducted within the Spring Creek NFH boundaries, however only a portion of the hatchery has been subjected to pedestrian survey. There is one prehistoric archaeological site documented within the boundaries of Spring Creek NFH. Site 45SA384, a single panel pictograph on a basalt boulder, is located below a scree slope just west of a water collection structure associated with the hatchery. The site has been evaluated and determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

All infrastructure associated with the development of the hatchery that is greater than 50 years old is considered potentially eligible for listing until formally evaluated. Quarters #1 was evaluated in 2016 and determined ineligible to the NRHP. The hatchery building that houses the LCRFHCL, originally the hatchery manager's residence, was evaluated in 2002 and determined ineligible to the NRHP.

The hatchery is located within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). As a result, Section 106 undertakings proposed by the USFWS are subject to all applicable requirements regarding consultation with the CRGNSA and interested tribes. The USFWS has a programmatic agreement (PA) in place with the Washington State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the administration of routine undertakings. This PA requires that the USFWS regional historic preservation officer review undertakings and

determine the appropriate path for Section 106 compliance.		
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TABLE 4. AFFECTED HATCHERY MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ANY ALTERNATIVES

HATCHERY MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS		
AFFECTED RESOURCE	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Land Use</p> <p>The majority of the lands within the Spring Creek NFH are undeveloped natural areas. Infrastructure for the Main Hatchery Area is located within a narrow band of land next to the Columbia River. Access to the land and infrastructure is via a hatchery access road which traverses hatchery property from State Highway 14 to the farthest hatchery building located to the east. Parking is available all along the access road for anglers.</p> <p>The Big White Ponds Area is also essentially undeveloped and can be accessed by State Highway 141 Alternate. Parking is available along this road’s shoulder. Access to the property is through a gate on the west side of State Highway 141 Alternate.</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on hatchery land use are insignificant. Access is provided via existing roads and little dedicated infrastructure and maintenance is required.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially decrease impacts on hatchery land use, but these impacts are insignificant. Maintenance of road rights-of-way, trails, and trash collection would likely be reduced, but the facility dedicates very little time at present to these activities.</p>
<p>Administration</p> <p>The Spring Creek NFH has an authorized staffing level of six full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. The FY 2018 budget to support facility operations was \$1.07M.</p>	<p>Overall the direct and indirect impacts on hatchery administration are insignificant. No dedicated FTEs are assigned to public access and the only administrative duties would be to post and enforce hatchery-specific fishing and access regulations.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially decrease impacts on hatchery administration, but these would be insignificant since impacts are themselves insignificant.</p>

TABLE 5. AFFECTED SOCIOECONOMICS AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ANY ALTERNATIVES

SOCIOECONOMICS	ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS	
AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Local and regional economies</p> <p>The Main Hatchery Area of the Spring Creek NFH is located in Skamania County, 60 miles east of Portland, Oregon (population: 2.35M) and 8 miles west of White Salmon, Washington. Skamania County’s agricultural production is a fairly small part of the county economy. According to USDA 2012a, there were 144 farms in the county, covering 6,473 acres. While those numbers are up from the last Census, the county still had fewer acres in farmland than any county in the state. The main crop in Skamania is actually trees. In 1982, the timber harvest in Skamania was 410 million board feet, with about 60 percent from federal land and 40 percent from timber industry land. Logging from both sources had all but dried up two decades later.</p> <p>The Big White Ponds Area of the Spring Creek NFH is located on the east side of the White Salmon River in Klickitat County, Washington, 66 miles east of Portland, Oregon (population: 2.35M) and 4 miles northwest of White Salmon, WA. According to USDA 2012b, Klickitat County’s economy is based primarily in manufacturing and agriculture, and boasts a diverse range of agricultural products it produces. In the western portion of the county, orchards, fruit packing, and wood product production dominate the local economy, while the</p>	<p>Fishing access at the Spring Creek NFH probably has little impact on the non-recreational fishing sectors of the local and regional economy. Fishing in the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers outside of the hatchery lands does however represent a substantial portion of the local and regional economy. Recreational fishing-related economic outputs associated with hatchery access are likely higher than non-recreational fishing-related outputs, but pale in comparison to those associated with off hatchery waters.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access on Spring Creek NFH could potentially negatively impact recreational fishing-related expenditures in the local and regional economies, but these impacts would pale in comparison to other expenditures associated with the adjacent Columbia and White Salmon Rivers. Impacts to non-recreational fishing sectors of the local and regional economies would likely be insignificant or non-existent.</p>

<p>eastern portion mainly relies on vegetable farming and wineries.</p> <p>With regard to recreational fishing, the Southwest Region of Washington had an estimated 2011 impact of \$114M in retail sales, \$188M in economic output, \$60.4M in labor income, \$11.6M in state & local taxes, \$14.5M in Federal taxes, and supported 1,565 jobs (NSIA 2015).</p>		
<p>AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>ANTICIPATED DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS</p>	
	<p>ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)</p>	<p>ALTERNATIVE B</p>
<p>Sector of the Economy (e.g. Agricultural Practices)</p> <p>The proposed action does not affect a certain sector of the economy.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE</p>		
<p>Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires all Federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and policies on minorities and low-income populations and communities.</p>	<p>The Service has not identified any potential high and adverse environmental or human health impacts from this proposed action. The Service has identified not minority or low income communities within the impact area. Minority or low income communities will not be disproportionately affected by any impacts from this proposed action.</p>	<p>The Service has not identified any potential high and adverse environmental or human health impacts from this proposed alternative. The Service has identified not minority or low income communities within the impact area. Minority or low income communities will not be disproportionately affected by any impacts from this proposed alternative.</p>

Cumulative Impact Analysis:

Cumulative impacts are defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 1508.7).

TABLE 6. ANTICIPATED CUMULATIVE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ANY ALTERNATIVES

Other Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activity Impacting Affected Environment	Descriptions of Anticipated Cumulative Impacts	
	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
<p>Fishing Fishing activities associated with this codification have likely been taking place since establishment of the hatchery in 1901.</p>	<p>Though actual data regarding angler use and catch are not available for the hatchery’s portion of Columbia and White Salmon Rivers, it’s reasonable to assume that fishing taking place on the facility is a tiny fraction of what takes place in the entire Columbia and White Salmon Rivers. Therefore, this alternative is thought not to significantly add to cumulative impacts.</p>	<p>Given the relatively low level of angler use and catch compared to the entire Columbia and White Salmon Rivers, elimination of fishing access at the facility would not significantly affect cumulative impacts.</p>
<p>Other wildlife-dependent recreation (i.e., road and trail development and use) Spring Creek NFH is located in the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. As such, outdoor-based recreation is an important socio-economic driver in the local area.</p>	<p>Access to additional areas for fishing probably has increased associated opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation, but this increase is insignificant when compared to the total amount of wildlife-dependent recreation that takes place in the entire Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area.</p>	<p>Eliminating fishing access to the hatchery will likely decrease the associated opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation, but this decrease is insignificant when compared to the total amount of wildlife-dependent recreation that takes place in the entire Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area.</p>
<p>Development and Population Increase The Main Hatchery Area of the Spring Creek NFH is located in Skamania County, Washington. The County's population in 2017 was estimated at 11,837 with a growth rate of 2.10% in the past year according to the most recent United States census data (Frey 2018). Skamania County, Washington is the 34th largest county in Washington. The Big White Ponds Area is located in Klickitat County, Washington. The County’s population in 2017 was estimated at 21,811 with a growth rate of 2.37% in the past year according to</p>	<p>The 2017 population growth rate in the county adjacent to Spring Creek NFH is higher than the 2018 national average of 0.62% (Frey 2018), so it can be speculated that the number of people fishing at the hatchery will increase over time. This increase will effectively be very small considering that the higher growth percentage is applied to a population of only about 12,000 individuals. Given that only about 8% of the Pacific Northwest’s population participates in fishing activities (USFWS 2018), the actual increase in anglers will be insignificant.</p>	<p>Since the expected population increase in the county adjacent to the hatchery is so small, elimination of fishing access will have very little if any cumulative impacts.</p>

<p>the most recent United States census data (Frey 2018).</p>		
	<p>ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)</p>	<p>ALTERNATIVE B</p>
<p>Agricultural land uses Agricultural production is a fairly small part of the local Skamania County economy. According to USDA 2012a, there were 144 farms in the county, covering 6,473 acres. While those numbers are up from the last Census, the county still had fewer acres in farmland than any county in the state. The main crop in Skamania is actually trees. In 1982, the timber harvest in Skamania was 410 million board feet, with about 60 percent from federal land and 40 percent from timber industry land. Logging from both sources had all but dried up two decades later. Timber harvest was 87 million board feet in 2015, with most of the cut on large private (non-industry) holdings. Logging employment in the county declined from 90 jobs in 1990 to 10 jobs in 2016.</p> <p>The economic history of the Klickitat County includes sheep and cattle raising, wheat, orchards, timber, and aluminum. Klickitat County has three distinct economic regions. The western third of the county relies on advanced manufacturing, orchards and fruit packing, and wood products. The eastern third is dominated by vegetable farming and increasing numbers of wineries, as well as the Roosevelt regional landfill. The central third boasts the county seat, Goldendale, the Maryhill Museum, windsurfing and kite boarding beaches, as well as the now-shuttered aluminum smelter (Bailey 2017).</p>	<p>The current use of the area surrounding the hatchery is expected to continue and fishing access should in no way contribute to any changes in agricultural land uses.</p>	<p>Elimination of fishing access at the hatchery should in no way contribute to any changes to surrounding agricultural land uses.</p>
<p>Use of lead tackle Beginning on December 4, 2010, the WGDW prohibited the use of lead fishing weights and jigs that measure 1.5 inches or less on twelve recreational fishing lakes. It also adopted a ban on fishing flies containing lead at Long Lake in Ferry County. Lead weights</p>	<p>Continuing fishing access at the hatchery could possible increase the amount of lead tackle use, but this use would be a tiny addition to the overall lead tackle use being experienced by fishermen accessing the entire</p>	<p>Elimination of fishing access at the hatchery will likely have very little to no effect on the cumulative impacts of lead tackle given that it represents a tiny fraction of the overall lead tackle use in the entire Columbia and White Salmon Rivers.</p>

and jigs are not prohibited in the Columbia River or in the Big White Salmon River.	Columbia and White Salmon Rivers.	
	ALTERNATIVE A (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	ALTERNATIVE B
Climate Change Impacts of climate change have been manifested through northward range shifts, population declines, and migration and spawn timing shifts (Crozier 2016). It is anticipated that conditions will only worsen for these cold water-adapted species.	The proposed action is not anticipated to significantly contribute to the cumulative impacts of climate change. The impacts of fossil fuel-powered angler vehicles accessing the facility would be tiny compared to the emissions coming from a multitude of vehicles transiting the Columbia Gorge via Interstate 84 and State Highway 14.	Elimination of fishing access at the hatchery could potentially decrease the cumulative impacts of climate change by decreasing the number fossil fuel-powered angler vehicles, but this decrease would likely be negligible given that the public can readily access the lake from a boat or for other bank areas off the hatchery and the tiny fraction of Gorge transiting vehicles this represents.

Mitigation Measures and Conditions

Spring Creek NFH staff and WDFW authorities will monitor the impacts of the action according to their responsibilities and jurisdiction. Any noticeable impact on safety, the environment (habitat or human environment), facility operations or other factors would be addressed through management actions to minimize the impacts. As there are no known substantial impacts at this time, monitoring is the main mitigation measure proposed.

Monitoring

Spring Creek NFH staff monitors the grounds including trails, access points and undeveloped property of the hatchery for changes in conditions, safety concerns, property damage, ecological impact, littering, pollution or other detrimental changes. This will be done as a course of standard work function throughout the normal tour of duty of management and operations staff. Any issue that impacts resources to a notable degree will trigger a discussion and a management response, if needed.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife authorities or other state and local authorities with jurisdiction may monitor resources (e.g., state waters and state fishery and wildlife) according to state regulations and in coordination with hatchery staff. If concerns or impacts are noticed by state authorities, the hatchery will work cooperatively with them to resolve any issues.

Enumeration of angler use and catch by WDFW would be helpful in case further assessments are required or if the Service wanted to document the track trends in these metrics over time.

Summary of Analysis

Codifying existing fishing on the facility will only have insignificant impacts on the natural and cultural resources and socioeconomic factors in the area of Spring Creek NFH.

List of Sources, Agencies and Persons Consulted:

Information was provided by the Manager of Spring Creek NFH, the Fishing Plan for the Spring Creek NFH, and from various environmental and socioeconomic websites focused on the State of Washington, Skamania and Klickitat Counties, and the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area.

References:

- Bailey, S. 2017. Klickitat County Profile. Washington State Employment Security Department. Olympia, WA.
- Brincken, E. 2009. Soil Survey of Klickitat County Area, Washington. Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Crozier, L. 2016. Impacts of Climate Change on Salmon of the Pacific Northwest. National Marine Fisheries Service. Seattle, WA.
- Frey, W.H. 2018. Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. Washington, DC.
- Haagen, E. 1990. Soil Survey of Skamania County Area, Washington. U.S. Soil Conservation Service.
- NPCC (Northwest Power and Conservation Council). 2018. White Sturgeon Population Trends Presentation at the April 2018 Northwest Power Council Meeting. Portland, OR.
- NSIA (Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association). 2015. Sport Fishing Expenditures and Economic Impacts on Public Lands in Washington. Southwick Associates, Fernandina Beach, FL.
- USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture). 2012a. Census of Agriculture: Skamania County, Washington. National Agricultural Statistics Service. Washington, DC.
- USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture). 2012b. Census of Agriculture: Skamania County, Washington. National Agricultural Statistics Service. Washington, DC.
- USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). 2016. Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020. Falls Church, VA.
- USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). 2018. 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and

Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Falls Church, VA.

WDE (Washington Department of Ecology). 2011. Focus on Water Availability: Wind-White Salmon Watershed, WRIA 29. Lacey, WA.

List of Preparers:

Tom Sinclair, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Regional Office, Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program, Portland, Oregon.

State Coordination:

The WDFW was notified via a letter of the hatchery's intent to codify public access and fishing on its lands. A copy of the Spring Creek NFH Fishing Plan was provided as a courtesy to WDFW prior to its release for public comment.

Points of Contact

WDFW Harvest and Regulation coordination: Matt Gardiner 360-906-6746

WDFW Enforcement: Captain Jeff Wickersham WDFW Region 5 Office 360-696-6211

Tribal Consultation:

The Yakima Nation was notified of the hatchery's intent to codify public access and fishing on its lands.

Point of Contact

Yakama Nation Fisheries Asst. Harvest Coordinator Megan Begay 509-945-4394

Public Outreach:

Since this action merely codifies public access and fish that is already known and enjoyed by the general public, no further coordination was deemed necessary

Determination:

This section will be filled out upon completion of any public comment period and at the time of finalization of the Environmental Assessment.

- The Service's action will not result in a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. See the attached "**Finding of No Significant Impact**".
- The Service's action **may significantly affect** the quality of the human environment and the Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

Preparer Signature: Thomas B. Sinclair, Jr. Date: 11/12/11

Name/Title/Organization: Thomas B. Sinclair, Jr./Westside Line Supervisor/Fish and Aquatic Conservation

~~Reviewer Signature:~~ U

Date: 11/12/11

Name/Title: Roy Elicker /Assistant Regional Director-Fish and Aquatic Conservation

**APPENDIX 1
OTHER APPLICABLE STATUTES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS & REGULATIONS**

STATUTES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, AND REGULATIONS	
<p>Cultural Resources</p> <p>American Indian Religious Freedom Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1996 – 1996a; 43 CFR Part 7</p> <p>Antiquities Act of 1906, 16 U.S.C. 431-433; 43 CFR Part 3</p> <p>Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. 470aa – 470mm; 18 CFR Part 1312; 32 CFR Part 229; 36 CFR Part 296; 43 CFR Part 7</p> <p>National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470-470x-6; 36 CFR Parts 60, 63, 78, 79, 800, 801, and 810</p> <p>Paleontological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 470aaa – 470aaa-11</p> <p>Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013; 43 CFR Part 10</p> <p>Executive Order 11593 – Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 36 Fed. Reg. 8921 (1971)</p> <p>Executive Order 13007 – Indian Sacred Sites, 61 Fed. Reg. 26771 (1996)</p>	<p>Operations at the Spring Creek NFH strive to meet all of these statutes, executive orders, and regulations.</p>
<p>Fish & Wildlife</p> <p>Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668-668c, 50 CFR 22</p> <p>Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531-1544; 36 CFR Part 13; 50 CFR Parts 10, 17, 23, 81, 217, 222, 225, 402, and 450</p> <p>Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, 16 U.S.C. 742 a-m</p>	

<p>Lacey Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 3371 et seq.; 15 CFR Parts 10, 11, 12, 14, 300, and 904</p> <p>Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 703-712; 50 CFR Parts 10, 12, 20, and 21</p> <p>Executive Order 13186 – Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds, 66 Fed. Reg. 3853 (2001)</p>	
<p>Natural Resources</p> <p>Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401-7671q; 40 CFR Parts 23, 50, 51, 52, 58, 60, 61, 82, and 93; 48 CFR Part 23</p> <p>Wilderness Act, 16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.</p> <p>Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.</p> <p>Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species, 64 Fed. Reg. 6183 (1999)</p>	
<p>Water Resources</p> <p>Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, 16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.; 15 CFR Parts 923, 930, 933</p> <p>Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (commonly referred to as Clean Water Act), 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.; 33 CFR Parts 320-330; 40 CFR Parts 110, 112, 116, 117, 230-232, 323, and 328</p> <p>Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 401 et seq.; 33 CFR Parts 114, 115, 116, 321, 322, and 333</p> <p>Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, 42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.; 40 CFR Parts 141-148</p> <p>Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Management, 42 Fed. Reg. 26951 (1977)</p>	

Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands, 42 Fed. Reg. 26961 (1977)	
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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND DECISION TO CODIFY RECREATIONAL FISHING OPPORTUNITIES**

**SPRING CREEK NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY
*UNDERWOOD, WASHINGTON***

The Service is codifying recreational fishing opportunities for Pacific Salmon, White Sturgeon, Smallmouth Bass, and other cool water species on the Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery in accordance with the Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery Fishing Plan. This action officially allows bank fishing on the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers. Approximately 18.8 acres of the hatchery's 89.57 acres is officially open to the general public for recreational fishing. Access to these fish opportunities is facilitated by officially allowing public vehicle use of the Main Hatchery Area access road and walking access to the White Salmon River through the Big White Ponds Area.

Selected Action

Alternative A—Proposed Action Alternative:

Fishing access would continue on Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery as it has for the last 118 years. This action officially allows bank fishing on the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers. Approximately 18.8 acres of the hatchery's 89.57 acres is officially open to the general public for recreational fishing. Access to these fish opportunities is facilitated by officially allowing public vehicle use of the Main Hatchery Area access road and walking access to the White Salmon River through the Big White Ponds Area.

This alternative is the Service's proposed action because it offers the best opportunity for public fishing access that would result in a minimal additional impact on physical and biological resources, while meeting the Service's mandates under the NWRSA and Secretarial Order 3356. It also sustains a long history (118 years) of allowing public access to federal lands for fishing.

Other Alternatives Considered and Analyzed

Alternative B—Fishing access would be terminated after 118 years at Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery.

This action was not selected because it would terminate public access that has been available for a very long time and it would not meet the Service's mandates under the NWRSA and Secretarial Order 3356.

Summary of Effects of the Selected Action

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide decision-making framework that 1) explored a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluated potential issues and impacts to the refuge, resources and values, and 3) identified mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts. The EA evaluated the effects associated with [xxx alternatives/proposed action (if no alternatives)]. It is incorporated as part of this finding.

Implementation of the agency's decision would be expected to result in the following environmental, social, and economic effects:

Codifying existing fishing opportunities on the facility only has insignificant effects on environmental, social, and economic factors since it sustains activities that have been taking place on the facility for the last 118 years.

Measures to mitigate and/or minimize adverse effects have been incorporated into the selected action. These measures include:

Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery staff and WDFW authorities will monitor the impacts of the action according to their responsibilities and jurisdiction. Any noticeable impact on safety, the environment (habitat or human environment), facility operations or other factors would be addressed through management actions to minimize the impacts. As there are no known substantial impacts at this time, monitoring is the main mitigation measure proposed.

While National Fish Hatcheries, by their nature, are unique areas protected for conservation of fish, wildlife and habitat, the proposed action will not have a significant impact on hatchery resources and uses for several reasons:

- In the context of local/State/hatchery fishing programs, the proposed action will result in no additional species harvested. The Service works closely with the State to ensure that additional species harvested on a hatchery are within the limits set by the State to ensure healthy populations of the species for present and future generations of Americans.
- The action will result in beneficial impacts to the human environment, including the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the hatchery, as well as the wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities and socioeconomics of the local economy, with only negligible adverse impacts to the human environment as discussed above.
- The adverse direct and indirect effects of the proposed action on air, water, soil, habitat, wildlife, aesthetic/visual resources, and wilderness values are expected to be minor and short-term. The benefits to long-term ecosystem health that these efforts will accomplish far outweigh any of the short-term adverse impacts discussed in this document.

- The action, along with proposed mitigation measures, will ensure that there is low danger to the health and safety of refuge staff, visitors, and the hunters/fishers themselves.
- The action is not in an ecologically sensitive area;
- The action will not impact any threatened or endangered species; or any Federally-designated critical habitat;
- The action will not impact any cultural or historical resources;
- The action will not impact any wilderness areas;
- There is no scientific controversy over the impacts of this action and the impacts of the proposed action are relatively certain.
- The proposal is not expected to have any significant adverse effects on wetlands and floodplains, pursuant to Executive Orders 11990 and 11988.

Public Review

The proposal has been thoroughly coordinated with all interested and/or affected parties. Parties contacted include:

The local District 5 Office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife was consulted about this action and to date that office has not provided any comments. The Service released the Fishing Plan and its Environmental Assessment for public comment and review during the period June 26, 2019 until August 12, 2019. The Service received one comment from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Headquarters that their office was not consulted prior to this action and that they had to address confusion among their constituents as to the exact nature of the Service's action. The Service responded that their local office had been consulted and that this was thought to be a sufficient level of coordination since no new changes were being made, just codification of activities that have been allowed for 118 years. Their District Office had apparently not transmitted the proposed action up their chain of command.

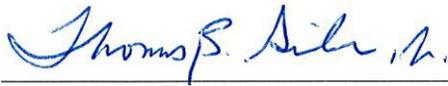
Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon a review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA as well as other documents and actions of record affiliated with this proposal, the Service has determined that the proposal to codify fishing opportunities on the Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment under the meaning of section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended). As such, an environmental impact statement is not required.

Decision

The Service has decided to officially open fishing opportunities at the Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery, Underwood, Washington on September 1, 2019. This action officially allows bank fishing on the Columbia and White Salmon Rivers. Approximately 18.8 acres of the hatchery's 89.57 acres is officially open to the general public for recreational fishing. Access to these fish opportunities is facilitated by officially allowing public vehicle use of the Main Hatchery Area access road and walking access to the White Salmon River through the Big White Ponds Area.

The action is consistent with applicable laws and policies.



Westside Line Supervisor
Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program
Pacific Region

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Date