



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

NAMPA FISHERIES RESEARCH

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To: LSRCP Boise Office

From: Larry Barrett, Jon Hansen, Brian Leth, John Cassinelli, Carl Stiefel

Subject: 2009 LSRCP Quarterly Narrative (January-March)

Hatchery Evaluation Studies (HES – Leth, Cassinelli, Stiefel)

Reports

- The 2006 Chinook report is in progress (Cassinelli)
- The 2005 Steelhead report is complete and awaiting signatures. It will be available for distribution during the next quarter (Stiefel)

Meetings and Coordination

- January 13-15, John attended the Nez Perce Tribal supplementation symposium in Orofino, Idaho
- January 26-30, Brian, John, and Carl attended the annual IDFG anadromous meeting in Boise.
- February 25th, Brian and Carl attended the Squaw Pond coordination meeting in Stanley, Idaho
- March 1-2 Brian, John, and Carl attended the annual LSRCP regional coordination meeting in Boise where both Brian and John gave presentations.
- March 4-6, Brian, John, Carl, Shane, Forrest, and Meghan attended the Idaho Chapter AFS annual meeting in Boise.

CWT Lab Activities

In January, Forrest completed the processing, verifying, and entering of all the 2008 Chinook samples as well as steelhead snouts from the 2008 fall fisheries. Forrest is currently preparing snout bags for the upcoming Chinook fishery which is projected to be very robust.

Hatchery Database Development

During the reporting period, Meghan continued to enter and validate historic spawning data into the new database format. This included a trip to Sawtooth and Pahsimeroi hatcheries to retrieve historic data. Beth welcomed a new addition to the family late last year. After some time off to be with the baby, she has returned and has been doing the final verifications on much of the trapping data that has already been entered so that it can once and for all be put to rest. John Haines has been working to finalize the "spawning" and "events" entry modules of the adult database while continuing to utilize user feedback. The trapping module appears to be finalized and the spawning module should be ready for further beta testing during the steelhead spawning in 2009. John will soon be making final adjustments to the "events" module that incorporates all of the final dispositions of trapped fish.

PIT Tagging

During January, February, March, and April approximately 220,000 Chinook salmon and 111,100 steelhead were PIT tagged by the IDFG marking crew. All of the Chinook and 84,200 of the steelhead were tagged at hatcheries operated by IDFG (including approximately 131,200 Chinook and 59,000

steelhead from the LSRCP hatcheries). John, Shane, and Meghan assisted the marking crew with PIT tagging at the Rapid River Fish Hatchery. Forrest and Shane assisted with PIT tagging at Clearwater Hatchery. Forrest and Meghan assisted with PIT tagging at Sawtooth Hatchery.

Building on the effort that started in 2006, 68,800 spring Chinook salmon were PIT tagged at Clearwater Fish Hatchery (15,100k each at Red R. and Crooked R. satellites, 12,000 at Powell satellite, 11,600 in Clear Creek and 15,000 in the Selway R.) in an effort to provide useful information for estimating both juvenile and adult survival rates to Lower Granite Dam and also to provide fisheries managers a tool to assess in-season adult return expectations for management of potential Chinook salmon fisheries. In addition to the tagging at Clearwater Fish Hatchery, 18,800 spring Chinook salmon at Sawtooth Fish Hatchery and 18,800 summer Chinook at Pahsimeroi Fish Hatchery were PIT tagged for the same purpose.

Throughout the tagging season, all of the Chinook salmon and steelhead PIT tag files generated by the IDFG marking crew were sent to the Nampa research office. All tag files were checked for errors and have been uploaded to the PTAGIS database as the tag groups are released. At the end of the 2009 smolt migration, smolt survival, from release to Lower Granite Dam, will be estimated for all PIT tag release groups and will be summarized in the next quarterly report.

Squaw Pond Operations

The Squaw Creek weir and trap were installed March 24 – 26 by Carl, Forrest, Shane, Meghan, and staff from Sawtooth Hatchery. A full detail of the Squaw Pond operations will be available in next quarter's report.

Steelhead Trapping

Steelhead trapping began in mid March and a full summary of the trapping will be available in next quarter's report.

General

John and Shane have spent the majority of this quarter continuing to summarize the historic hatchery rack age compositions as well as putting together historic run reconstructions and SAR's for the LSRCP facilities. This effort is ongoing but great progress had been made.

Carl prepared and implemented quality control measures for CWT recovery information prior to uploading the 2008 recover data to RMIS.

John and Carl have taken on the Trout In The Classroom program and are currently the mentoring biologists for Michelle Jenkins second grade class at Roosevelt Elementary in Nampa.

Shane and Forrest traveled to Hagerman National, Niagara Springs, and Magic Valley Hatcheries to sample and assess CWT retention and adipose fin clip quality of steelhead. A sample of fish from numerous raceways was scanned for CWTs and visually inspected for adipose clips at each hatchery.

Harvest Monitoring-Salmon (Hansen)

Salmon Region Office HMP staff worked on report tables, appendices, and input files for the Gauss harvest program for the 2007-2008 annual report. Staff from HMP and Northwest Environmental Services created a run year version of the Gauss program that calculates steelhead harvest estimates and confidence limits for coded-wire tags recoveries. Salmon Region staff created a presentation of last summer's Chinook salmon fishery on the upper Salmon River for the IDFG Anadromous Meeting. HMP staff provided incidental catch numbers for bull trout and fall Chinook to the Boise Office. HMP staff attended the annual LSRCP coordination meeting and the Idaho Chapter of the American Fisheries Society meeting in Boise.

Salmon Region HMP staff provided input regarding the 2009 Chinook salmon fishing regulations and assisted Regional personnel with technical questions pertaining to the Creel Application Program. HMP staff attended public meetings in Stanley, Challis, and Salmon regarding the pending upper Salmon River Chinook salmon fishery. HMP staff assisted Salmon Regional fisheries staff install and monitor weirs and traps to assess steelhead immigration into select upper Salmon River tributaries.

HMP staff interviewed 13,204 steelhead anglers state wide during the months of January, February and March (Table 1). Cool weather created slow fishing conditions in the upper Salmon River. The only exception to the slow fishing was Section 19, where exceptional fishing the last days of March resulted in an average of 3 hours per fish caught. Creel personnel checked a total of 3,498 fish. Anglers released a slightly greater total number of fish compared to the total number of fish kept.

Table 1. IDFG unexpanded steelhead creel of Idaho-licensed anglers, summarized by river section, January 1 – March 31, 2009.

SECTION	ANGLERS	HOURS	KEPT	HATCHERY RELEASED	WILD RELEASED ^a	TOTAL	VOLUNTEER SNOUTS	HOURS / CAUGHT	HOURS / KEPT
02	33	151	1	0	1	2	0	76	151
03	904	5,426	351	136	159	646	0	8	15
04	1,192	6,307	284	55	271	610	0	10	22
05	1,243	6,840	395	87	163	645	0	11	17
07	3,431	18,105	771	234	2,071	3,076	0	6	23
10	69	396	4	2	3	9	0	44	99
11	506	1,966	69	5	59	133	0	15	28
12	212	896	27	10	41	78	0	11	33
14	250	3,053	151	43	198	392	0	8	20
15	1,442	13,425	719	386	358	1,463	0	9	19
16	1,013	4,262	202	81	106	389	0	11	21
17	1,603	6,483	240	90	66	396	0	16	27
18	537	2,300	58	36	27	121	0	19	40
19	446	2,337	176	324	239	739	0	3	13
20	323	1,176	50	8	69	127	0	9	24
TOTAL	13,204	73,121	3,498	1,497	3,831	8,826	0	8	21

^a Includes wild, naturally-produced, and hatchery fish without an adipose fin clip.

Harvest Monitoring-Clearwater (Barrett)

Powered by another large return over Lower Granite Dam in the fall of 2008, steelhead fisheries in the region continued to attract lots of anglers this winter. January, February, and March saw some very good fishing at most of our terminal fisheries. Overall through the end of March we interviewed 8,451 anglers who fished 44,636 hours on the Snake, Clearwater, and lower Salmon rivers and caught 5,864 fish, of which 2,342 were harvested. This is a catch rate of 8 hrs/fish caught and 21 hrs/fish harvested.

Although we had a big freeze-up late last fall, fishing conditions have generally been good in the Clearwater this spring. The return of hatchery "B" steelhead was more than twice that of last year, with over 40,000 fish, including almost 5,500 unmarked hatchery B's, estimated to have crossed Lower Granite Dam last fall. In the Clearwater drainage we focused our winter monitoring efforts on the mainstem and North Fork in the Orofino area, the mainstem in the Clear Creek area, and the South Fork Clearwater River. Large numbers of anglers gathered in all of those areas. Angler interest in the South Fork Clearwater again hit a new high this year; on one Saturday in mid-March we counted over 220 vehicles in an eight mile stretch of river. In January, February, and March, we interviewed 3,557 anglers on the South Fork Clearwater who reported fishing 18,793 hours and caught 3,238 steelhead, of which 861 were harvested. This is a catch rate of 6 hrs/fish caught and 24 hrs/fish harvested. Of the 2,177 fish released, 2,135 were unmarked. The vast majority of those released were unmarked hatchery fish.

In contrast to the Clearwater, angler effort was relatively low again this spring on the lower mainstem Salmon River. We shifted the bulk of our winter monitoring effort there from the Riggins check station to more roving and access creel surveys in sections 10, 11, and 12 in an attempt to increase our sample in sections 10 and 11. Fishing conditions on the lower mainstem were marginal in January and early February due to ice, but conditions improved considerable by late February. Even then we still saw relatively little fishing effort there. Through the end of March on the mainstem lower Salmon we interviewed 787 anglers who fished 3,258 hours and caught 238 fish, of which 118 were harvested. This is a catch rate of 14 hrs/fish caught and 28 hrs/fish harvested.

The Little Salmon River was essentially devoid of anglers until mid-March, which I attribute to a couple of factors. First, a lot of anglers who usually fish the Little Salmon in the spring instead went to the South Fork Clearwater, and second, even as of the first of April, most of the fishing holes above Hazard Creek (where the majority of spring effort occurs) are still hard to get to due to snow and ice. April will likely be a busy month there when things thaw out. Through the end of March on the Little Salmon we interviewed 322 anglers who fished 1,172 hours and reported catching 132 fish, of which 55 were harvested. This is a catch rate of 9 hrs/fish caught and 24 hrs/fish harvested.

Our outfitter snout reward program paying \$3.00 per snout to participating fishing outfitters continued to show dividends. For the fall 2008 season we collected almost 2,100 additional snouts from 14 businesses on the Snake, Clearwater, and lower Salmon rivers. This essentially doubled our sample overall and accounted for 35% to 83% of our fish checked on several hard to sample river sections.