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News Release



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Significant Loss of Spring Chinook in Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery Incubators

The Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery experienced a significant loss of spring Chinook fry in its incubators Wednesday morning, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today. This loss represents about three-quarters of the fry needed to meet the hatchery's smolt production target of up to 750,000 fish for this year. The loss will likely impact the hatchery's escapement goal of 2,250 adult salmon returning to the mouth of the Deschutes River in 2010.

The accident is under investigation but initial information indicates that the water supply to the incubator was inadvertently turned off Tuesday while new equipment was being installed.

Impacts of the loss on spring Chinook salmon returns to the Deschutes River basin in 2010 are unknown. Many factors will determine future returns, including ocean and river conditions, dam operations, harvest management and actions taken to make up this production shortfall at the hatchery.

"We experienced a shortfall in smolt production in 1994," said Mike Paiya, Warm Springs' hatchery manager. "Due to very low returns that year we were able to release only about 60,000 smolts, yet with a combination of Warm Springs and Round Butte stocks we had a good return four years later."

The Service will work closely with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at Round Butte Hatchery to replace some of the fry lost in this accident, Paiya said. Both Warm Springs and Round Butte Hatchery spring Chinook stocks are of Deschutes Basin origin. If Round Butte fry are released from the Warm Springs Hatchery they will have a differentiating external mark so that they may be excluded from future Warm Springs broodstock.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.