

US Fish and Wildlife Service Hatchery Review  
Columbia Gorge Province Federal Hatcheries  
Assessments and Recommendations  
Questions & Answers

**Q. What are the key changes recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Hatchery Review Team?**

**A.** The key recommendations are:

- **Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery –**
  - Reduce tule fall Chinook production from 15.1 million fish to 10.5 million fish to reduce potential health risks from overcrowding. Reduction could be offset by increased tule fall Chinook production at Bonneville Fish Hatchery so no net loss to ocean fisheries would be expected.
  - Conduct additional studies of the possible interaction of hatchery fall Chinook released from Spring Creek hatchery on listed naturally spawning fall Chinook in the lower Columbia River, tributaries and estuary. Not enough is currently known about the impact of the interaction of the hatchery stocks and naturally spawning fish.
- **Carson National Fish Hatchery –**
  - Continue existing spring Chinook salmon program on the Wind River, where there are no naturally spawning spring Chinook to be impacted by hatchery fish.
  - Continue rearing spring Chinook at Carson NFH for reintroduction to the Walla Walla River.
- **Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery –**
  - Terminate the release of upriver bright fall Chinook from Little White Salmon NFH and replace with a rearing-only program. When fish reach sub-yearling stage, the following spring, they would be trucked upriver and released at sites above The Dalles Dam. This recommendation is based on the team's concerns that this introduced upriver stock may have genetic and ecological impacts on the recovery of natural populations of fall Chinook in the lower Columbia River.
  - A much smaller upriver bright fall Chinook salmon release program could be maintained at Little White Salmon to support terminal tribal and sport fisheries in Drano Lake.
  - Terminating large releases into the Columbia River of upriver bright fall Chinook from Little White Salmon also would help address the team's concerns about biological and management inconsistencies between the hatchery's current production program and conservation and restoration goals for upriver bright fall Chinook in the Yakima River and mid-Columbia region.
  - In the Yakima Basin, use upriver bright fall Chinook broodstock from that area to ensure local adaptation of the Yakima releases. The team recommends transitioning to this local broodstock in the lower Yakima River. The present

strategy of upriver bright fall Chinook stock maintained at Little White Salmon does not allow this local adaptation to occur.

- As a long-term goal, replace releases of upriver bright fall Chinook in the Bonneville pool region with increased upriver releases within the historic natural population areas of upriver bright fall Chinook upstream of The Dalles Dam. Such a management adjustment would also best serve the goal of providing *in-place* and *in-kind* mitigation for the loss of upriver bright fall Chinook spawning habitats inundated by the pools behind John Day and The Dalles dams as well as other upriver projects, such as McNary Dam.
  - Conduct additional studies of the possible interaction of hatchery fall Chinook released from Little White Salmon hatchery on listed naturally spawning fall Chinook in the lower Columbia River, tributaries and estuary. Not enough is currently known about the impact of the interaction of the hatchery stocks and naturally spawning fish.
  - At Little White Salmon hatchery, work with the Yakama Nation and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to transition from current non-local spring Chinook stock to a more suitable local broodstock such as Klickitat spring Chinook. This would allow the present mitigation program to proceed with reduced impact on nearby natural production areas and would allow this program to support the proposed reintroduction of spring Chinook into the Big White Salmon River.
  - At Little White Salmon hatchery, start captive broodstock program for critically imperiled spring Chinook native to the White River in the upper Wenatchee Basin to rebuild those populations.
- **Willard National Fish Hatchery –**
    - Eventually phase out existing coho salmon production as soon as there are adequate numbers of returning coho adults in upper Columbia tributaries, such as the Methow and Wenatchee, to provide broodstock at upriver hatcheries or naturally spawning populations are secure. Willard would then support White River spring Chinook production at Little White Salmon hatchery and be used for other upriver supplementation or reintroduction programs.

**Q. Why did the team recommend these changes?**

**A.** To ensure that our Service hatcheries are operated on the best scientific principles and contribute to sustainable fisheries and the recovery of naturally spawning populations of salmon that are the icons of our region.

**Q. When will the Service start making these changes?**

**A.** Before making any changes, the Service must obtain concurrence from our state, tribal and federal fisheries co-managers. However, it is expected that operational changes that do not require major modifications to facilities are expected to be implemented within the next year. Changes that require modifications to facilities are tied to funding and construction requirements and will take longer. Critical items, such as isolation facilities for the White River captive brood

program, are expected to move quickly. Significant changes in production levels, particularly those affecting fall Chinook, require approval through the U.S. v. Oregon process, a legal case that gives tribes the right to harvest salmon in usual and accustomed places. Those discussions are ongoing and are expected to conclude in 2008.

**Q. Will the changes cost money and if so, how much?**

A. Some changes will be costly. We will recommend these changes to the organizations that fund fisheries mitigation and restoration activities in this region so that they can make budgetary decisions about implementing the recommendations. Some changes are just a reallocation of our individual program budgets or other modifications to current operations. If our state, federal and tribal co-managers agree, those recommendations can be phased in with very little expense.

**Q. Will these changes require changes in fishery management and if so, what are those?**

A. Modifications to upriver bright fall Chinook salmon production and harvest strategies are already under discussion in the development of the new Columbia River Management Plan. This plan is being developed within the framework of US v OR, a legal case that gives tribes the right to harvest salmon in usual and accustomed places.

**Q. Does the Service plan studies to evaluate the impact of hatchery-raised fall Chinook at Spring Creek and Little White Salmon hatcheries on listed naturally spawning fall Chinook?**

A. Such studies have already been initiated within the Big White Salmon River.

**Q. Is the Service's hatchery review being coordinated with the hatchery review being done by NOAA Fisheries?**

A. Yes. The two agencies are working closely to ensure a uniform approach to conducting these reviews. We are on each other's teams and we are using the same scientific models. Between the two reviews, all federally funded fish production in the Columbia River Basin will be evaluated within the next few years.

**Q. Has the Service completed other reviews of its hatcheries?**

A. The review of the four Columbia River Gorge facilities is the fourth phase of our review process. We started with the Warm Springs NFH in July 2005, moved into the Wenatchee, Methow and Entiat (Upper Columbia Basin) in March 2006, then on to Eagle Creek NFH in Estacada July 2006, and have now completed the Gorge facilities which we began reviewing in September 2006. Our next and last phase is the review of the Snake River facilities, which we began reviewing this past June. A draft report will be available for public comment early January 2008. We hope to have our final recommendations by March 2008.

We recently met with our state, federal and tribal partners to develop an aggressive implementation timeline for recommendations the Service Hatchery Review Team provided on

the Eagle Creek National Fish Hatchery programs. Our review of that facility was completed last July. These changes will begin to be implemented this spring. We completed the review of the Entiat NFH as part of the Wenatchee, Entiat and Methow watershed assessment in April 2007. The Review Team recommended terminating the current spring Chinook program and replacing it with Yakama Nation's coho reintroduction program. The hatchery began implementing this change in June 2007. This change was important to the protection of ESA listed species in the Entiat watershed.