



# Improved hatchery actions for Columbia River Basin fish

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The federal agencies that manage the Federal Columbia River Power System – the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bonneville Power Administration – have proposed a comprehensive set of actions to help Columbia River Basin salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act. In its biological opinion (BiOp) for the FCRPS, NOAA Fisheries evaluated the action agencies' proposal and added some additional items to establish a set of actions known as a "Reasonable and Prudent Alternative" (RPA). The BiOp concludes that, with the RPA, ESA-listed Columbia River Basin fish will be on a trend toward recovery.

**A** well-run hatchery program can be one tool to help support wild stocks and provide fish for harvest. It is also very important that our hatchery investment make sense in the context of our overall goals for ESA-listed fish.

To help achieve these goals, the FCRPS action agencies will implement improved hatchery actions, including those listed below.

## **New actions to reform existing hatcheries and reduce effects on wild salmon and steelhead**

NOAA's Hatchery Scientific Review Group and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are currently reviewing federal hatchery programs on the Columbia and Snake rivers. These reviews will ensure that hatchery operations and programs will use best management practices to help conservation and recovery of ESA-listed salmon and steelhead.

Hatchery reform actions in the FCRPS RPA include:

- Review the John Day Hatchery Mitigation Program.

- Transition the Tucannon River steelhead supplementation program to use of local broodstock in order to protect wild steelhead.

## **New safety net programs to reduce extinction risk and preserve genetic resources**

Safety net programs are used to prevent extinction and preserve the genetic integrity of a fish species that is endangered. Most notable among the Columbia Basin listed fish protected by a safety net program is the Snake River sockeye salmon. We will implement the following safety net actions in the FCRPS hatchery RPA:

- Set performance standards for Snake River sockeye production programs.
- Begin program for kelt reconditioning for Upper Columbia River steelhead in the Entiat, Methow, Okanogan, Yakima and Snake River Basins. (Kelt reconditioning is the process of nurturing steelhead that have already spawned so that they can spawn more than once, increasing productivity.)
- Use local broodstock in Okanogan steelhead hatchery operations to help protect wild fish.



- Expand the Snake River sockeye program to release between 500,000 and 1 million smolts.
- Explore options to transport returning adult Snake River sockeye from Lower Granite Dam to spawning grounds.

### **New hatchery actions to assist in promoting recovery**

If they use best management practices to protect wild stocks, hatcheries may also help “jump start” recovery. Some of the newer hatcheries in the region funded by the hydro system, such as the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery and the CleElum Hatchery, are already state-of-the-art facilities. Additional facilities and programs will be designed at existing hatcheries, following best management practices, so that the new hatchery stocks will help promote recovery of targeted fish.

We may also build new hatcheries if rigorous scientific review shows that doing so can help to

advance recovery goals for ESA-listed salmon and steelhead. Actions in the hatchery RPA of this type include:

- Build the Northeast Oregon Hatchery, contingent on a NOAA-approved management plan, for Snake River spring/summer Chinook.
- Reintroduce spring Chinook into the Okanogan Basin, consistent with NOAA’s Upper Columbia River Salmon Recovery Plan.
- Develop local broodstock of Upper Columbia River steelhead from the Okanogan Basin.
- Develop local broodstock from wild returning fish in the East Fork Salmon River.
- Assess habitat potential and conduct pilot project to explore reintroduction of Columbia River chum below Bonneville Dam.