

POLICY STATEMENT

The Hatchery Reform Project requires two key components – science and policy.

Scientific Framework

The first component has been an unparalleled applied scientific review of hatchery programs and hatchery program possibilities in the Columbia River Basin. This scientific effort was directed to answer the questions of whether and in what manner hatcheries can be used to assist the managers in meeting their conservation and harvest goals for salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin.

This initial component has been successfully completed over the last two years. This effort involved interactions between the members of the Hatchery Scientific Review Group and several hundred habitat, harvest, and hatchery managers, analysts, and scientists. The HSRG focused on conservation goals in each ESU in the Columbia River and the salmon and steelhead harvest goals of the tribes and states.

Several thousand miles of travel and weeks of working meetings occurred throughout the entire Columbia Basin in order to incorporate the most current information, the best understanding of the goals, limitations, and opportunities for habitat, hatcheries, and harvests in the various regions of this vast watershed.

The scientists were asked to do more than identify problems. They accepted the harder task of developing one or more solutions to each problem. They also accepted the challenge of preparing a sufficiently useful record of the data used and the tools used for analysis so that the managers can, either now or in the future, develop a solution that might better meet their goals.

The HSRG's recommendations are not the only possible alternatives for managing hatchery programs to meet conservation and harvest goals. As such, the managers may develop other solutions which better meet their program principles and goals. Success over time will be defined by the managers' ability to take actions in the future to adjust hatchery programs based on good science to meet their conservation and harvest goals.

The report that follows this policy statement was prepared by and is the product of the members of the Hatchery Scientific Review Group.

The managers have all expressed their appreciation for the hard work and commitment of the HSRG members that was necessary to complete their report which describes the results of an unparalleled comprehensive scientific review of hatchery programs and hatchery program possibilities in the Columbia River Basin that can assist the managers

in meeting their conservation and harvest goals for salmon and steelhead in the Basin. The managers also compliment the HSRG on completing their report on schedule and look forward to reviewing the results and recommendations. Finally, the conclusion by the HSRG that hatcheries can be managed to provide harvest benefits and meet conservation objectives is a positive outcome of the review.

Policy Framework

The second component of the Hatchery Reform Project is related to the policy framework to implement hatchery reform in the Columbia River Basin. From the onset of the Hatchery Reform Project, a Steering Committee was established to serve as a liaison with other major policy initiatives already underway in the Columbia River Basin during this same period. (The membership of the Steering Committee is included in the Introduction.)

These policy decisions will be as challenging as the scientific component for several reasons. It is hard to recall a time when more management decisions and parameters were in motion and undecided. In the last twelve months, tribal, state and federal co-managers, and others have concluded domestic and international agreements setting forth unprecedented commitments and dynamic management frameworks needed to protect and recover anadromous fish resources. These agreements provide a context for considering and implementing the recommendations in this report.

The HSRG recommendations are technical and scientific in nature. They are not intended to be policy decisions, but rather their function is to inform policy decisions. They also are not mandates that carry the force of law or policy, and the intent is not for them to be a litmus test or the exclusive basis for deciding HGMPs or funding decisions. As such, any changes to hatchery programs in response to the recommendations must also be informed by and consistent with existing legal and policy mandates. These mandates include, but are not limited to, the following items:

- Legislatively authorized and mandated mitigation obligations of the FCRPS and other dams to provide fish. The mitigation obligations associated with the FCRPS and other dams are substantial and continuing into the future;
- Legally mandated harvest agreements in (*U.S. v. Oregon*, Pacific Salmon Treaty) and tribal treaty trust reserved fishing rights;
- Logistical challenges and facility constraints;
- Funding needs for new infrastructure and operating budgets (which have been stagnant or decreasing) necessary for implementation and appropriate M&E.

This list is not complete but it conveys the magnitude of the management issues, goals, and decisions that have been made and are being made by the states, tribes, and federal agencies at the same time that this effort was proceeding.

This hatchery reform effort does not change, expand, or limit the legal rights or responsibilities of any government in the Columbia River Basin. The HSRG recommendations are expected to be adjusted, as needed, to harmonize with legal and policy issues.

The hatchery reform effort will need to provide the ability for transitions to occur over time in response to these management goals, funding opportunities, and commitments contained in new agreements for management goals.

The fisheries managers have the expertise and authority to manage these salmon and steelhead populations. The managers are already considering the HSRG recommendations and, where appropriate, intend to incorporate the results of the scientific review in their programs on a case by case basis.

The managers also have the responsibility to make policy decisions on facility needs and constraints; as well as funding needs for new infrastructure and operating budgets necessary for implementation of hatchery reform measures.

Implementing the HSRG recommendations will require a substantial long-term commitment of resources. New and/or improved facilities as well as increased O&M budgets that include appropriate M&E funding will be necessary. As a result of this effort, significant opportunities should be available to fund new and improved programs. These improvements will aid in population recovery and enhanced harvest. Funding the decisions about what to do (goals) were explicitly reserved to the other processes identified above. The good news is that in most of these areas, decisions on the goals for the next 10 years or longer have been made or soon will be made. The time for action is upon us.

Now, leadership by the managers and provision of the necessary funds will result in very important and long-lasting benefits for the salmon and steelhead and the communities that depend on these resources.

Jim Waldo, Chair
Columbia River Hatchery Reform Steering Committee