

**Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Advisory Board  
Application for Funding**

**Applicant:** Jeff Korth, WDFW, Region 2

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**Proposal Title:** 2016 Methow River Spring Chinook Conservation Fishery Creel

**Type of Proposal:** New conservation fishing opportunity for ESA listed surplus hatchery origin spring Chinook in the lower Methow River

**Date of submission:** CRSSRAB mtg February 25, 2016

**Effective Period of Funding:** May 1- July 31, 2015

**Amount of Funding Requested:** \$54,411

**Activity to be funded:** Provide funding for creel to determine impacts to ESA listed wild spring Chinook resultant to opening a lower Methow River spring Chinook conservation fishery.

**Status Summary:** **This is a NEW proposal for an anticipated new opportunity;** provided the Section 10 permits have been received. Permit applications are currently being reviewed by NOAA. The funding includes a longer period of time, motor pool vehicles, and top step salaries & benefits in order to provide certainty that all contingencies are covered. Actual funding needs depend on the total length of the fisheries and experience level of the staff hired.

**Background:** The Methow River Spring Chinook Conservation Fishery provides an entirely new opportunity for anglers in the upper Columbia River. Anglers have not been able to fish the mainstem Methow River for spring Chinook for almost 30 years.

Through conditions of their FERC licenses, the Chelan, Douglas, and Grant County Public Utility Districts (PUDs) have been required to fund a hatchery conservation programs for Methow River spring Chinook at Methow Hatchery. In conjunction with this mitigation program has been an intensive Monitoring and Evaluation program designed in part to measure success of the hatchery program and its effects/impacts to

their naturalized (wild) cohorts. Information resulting from 20 years of this intensive monitoring has yielded a significant correlation between high escapement and low productivity (fewer fish per redd produced and smaller size at migration which in turn negatively affects overall survival and adult abundance).

In addition, spring Chinook have been supplemented in the Methow River Basin from the Winthrop National Fish Hatchery (WNFH) for over 40 years, using the non-endemic Carson stock spring Chinook for about half of this period. While WNFH changed to the endemic stock some 20 years ago, this large hatchery program (currently targeting a 500,000 smolt release) is entirely harvest mitigation for the blocked area above Chief Joseph Dam. Lack of a Section 10 permit to address the impacts to wild fish and the PUD's conservation hatchery programs had prevented targeted fisheries on the WNFH program since the ESA listing of the Methow River Basin endemic population in 1996.

To meet recovery objectives for the Methow River spring Chinook population, it is necessary to manage the number of hatchery origin adults on the spawning grounds (as outlined in the Methow Basin spring Chinook HGMP submitted to NMFS and is consistent with HSRG and HRT recommendations for these programs). To accomplish this objective, multiple adult management strategies have been developed by the co-managers and permitting authorities. Of these strategies, conservation fisheries, targeting the surplus hatchery origin adults within the lower Wenatchee River will be instrumental in assisting to meet adult management goals. In addition, fisheries are an important tool to garner public support for recovery programs, including adult fish management. To ensure wild fish take limits are not exceeded, intensive creel surveys are required both to determine overall harvest and to monitor ESA permit compliance/take limits for wild fish.

**Proposed Activity:**

It is anticipated that to meet the creel monitoring necessary to closely manage the wild fish take limit imposed on a Methow River spring Chinook fishery, three (3) technicians will be required to provide the necessary coverage and data collection needs for up to three months.

**Fishery Location(s):** Methow River – From mouth to Foghorn Dam. This fishery zone targets surplus ESA listed Methow River hatchery spring Chinook from both WNFH and potentially Methow Hatchery.

**Fishery Season:** May 1 – July 31 (Actual duration is limited to wild fish take limits).

**Assistance Required:**

WDFW requests funding for creel staff and motor vehicle leases, mileage and maintenance. The funding request is anticipated to be the maximum required the fishery extends the full season and if all staff qualify for top step wages. More accurate budgets can be provided as the fishery is initiated.

**Budget Summary:**

**Estimated Fishery Monitoring Costs**

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**Salaries and benefits**

Scientific Technician 3 (3 staff months @ $\leq$ \$5,538/mo salaries and benefits)	\$16,614
Scientific Technician 2 (6 staff months @ $\leq$ \$4,912/mo salaries and benefits)	<u>\$29,472</u>
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>\$46,086</b>

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Vehicle leases (3 @ \$325/month ea, 5 months) -includes 500 miles/month, fuel, and maintenance	\$ 4,875
Vehicle operation and maintenance (\$0.46/ additional mile) - 1,500 additional miles/mo * 5 sm = 7,500 miles	\$ 3,450
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>\$8,325</b>

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<b>Total Budget Amount Requested</b>	<b><u>\$54,411</u></b>
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**Need for Proposed Activity:**

Spring Chinook fisheries in the mainstem Methow River can only be conducted under permit due to their ESA listing status. The permits either define the allowable impacts and/or require a high degree of monitoring to assess impacts to the listed species. The primary objective of the creel monitoring is to determine impacts of harvest activities on listed wild spring Chinook populations. In addition to monitoring ESA impacts will be estimates of angler effort, catch and harvest estimates, and recovery of coded-wire tags and PIT tags.

**Benefit of Proposed Activity:**

This fishery is an integral component of adult spring Chinook management helping to ensure the correct numbers and cohort of spawners. The proposal would add a new fishery to the Upper Columbia Basin for spring Chinook and also provides access to fish that were intended as mitigation for harvest. Lastly, once permits for these hatchery programs and fisheries in the tributaries are completed, there would be allowable impact coverage for the mainstem Columbia River as well, much the same as the steelhead fisheries operate currently.

**Additional Considerations:**

Management of the returning adult population of Methow spring Chinook, in particular control of the number of hatchery adults on the spawning grounds, is critical to the

recovery of the population. Removal of excess hatchery adults via a fishery is one of the adult management actions considered in the HGMPs; however, it would not likely be sufficient in and of itself to remove sufficient numbers of hatchery adults to have the desired impact. Removal of excess adult hatchery fish at hatchery intakes and dams would also be necessary to accomplish the entire extraction. Removal of salmon at structures without the social benefit of removal through a fishery would be unacceptable to the public, likely resulting in the termination of adult extraction at structures. It is therefore desirable that both a fishery and removal at structures are promulgated simultaneously. A fishery and the associated economic benefits would also likely promote public acceptance and willing participation in recovery efforts.