

## **BRIEFING PAPER**

### **Columbia River Spring Chinook Allocation**

- The Washington Commission policy allocates ESA impacts in 2009 at 60% sport and 40% commercial while the Oregon Commission policy allocates 55% sport and 45% commercial.
- The staff provided an alternative to the commission on April 17, which leaves 5% of the non-treaty impact unused to be passed through to escapement or to help achieve catch balancing with the tribes if needed.
- The additional harvest/opportunity will be driven primarily by the actual run size and secondarily by the remaining allocation.

#### **Fishery and Run Updates**

- Bonneville Dam counts total 16,960 fish through April 28, 2009.
- The counts to date are indicating very late timed passage or a run less than the preseason forecast of 298,900. TAC has not updated the run size and fish passage during the next two weeks will be key for determining the actual run size.
- Non-treaty fisheries that have not been set have been put on hold pending improvement in dam counts or after the run size is updated by the TAC.
- Columbia River sport fisheries below Bonneville Dam occurred as planned with 142,200 angler trips producing a total catch of 16,800 spring Chinook, compared to 16,300 expected. The sport fishery above Bonneville Dam has harvested less than 200 fish.
- The Columbia River commercial fishery harvested a total of 4,400 spring Chinook in three fishing periods, compared to 5,800 expected.
- Select Areas fisheries have harvested 1,474 spring Chinook through April 24, including 957 in Youngs Bay, 352 in Blind Slough, 102 in Tongue Point and 63 in Deep River.
- Based on the preseason forecast, non-Indian fisheries have used 41% of the available impacts.

#### **Recommendations**

- Authorize the WDFW director to manage remaining fisheries with up to 95% of the ESA impact limit (sport 5% less than WFWC and commercial 5% less than OFWC) and consistent with *U.S. v Oregon* obligations.
- Recommended priority order of May-June fisheries (consistent with CRFWG and Commission policy)
  1. Sport fisheries above Bonneville and Select Area Fisheries.
  2. Mainstem Columbia sport and commercial salmon fisheries below Bonneville Dam.



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ITEM B.

May 1, 2009  
FWC confcall

April 20, 2009

Mr. Rob Lothrop  
Executive Director, Acting  
Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission  
729 NE Oregon, Suite 200  
Portland, Oregon 97232

Dear Rob;

As you are aware, the 2009 Bonneville Dam counts of Columbia River spring Chinook to date are very low and do not yet reflect the forecasted return of 298,900 adults. At this point, it appears that the run is late-timed in passing Bonneville, similar to the past few years and consistent with the current river conditions of cool temperatures and higher than average flows (FPC 47-09).

We regret that the slow passage of spring Chinook has once again provided little opportunity for early April ceremonial salmon for traditional tribal use. We have heard the expressed concern of the Columbia River Tribes regarding the accuracy of the forecast, the conduct of the lower river fisheries and potential impacts to the *U.S. v. Oregon* catch balancing provision.

The 2009 non-treaty spring Chinook fishery was planned with an understanding of potential forecast error and the strong potential for another late run that would not be updated until early-mid May. The following fishery strategies were implemented to ensure compliance with ESA limits and *U.S. v. Oregon* allocation provisions:

1. A management buffer was established for both the lower Columbia sport and commercial fisheries that occur prior to the run-size update. The buffer is intended to be sufficient to cover potential forecast error.
2. A harvest ceiling was established for upriver Chinook prior to the run-size update, consistent with the buffer. Remaining lower river mainstem harvest will not occur until after the run-size update.
3. The lower Columbia sport fishery was reduced to 4 days per week above Hayden Island Power Lines and 3 days per week below Hayden Island Power Lines and is scheduled to end on April 22.
4. Twenty-five percent of the sport fishery was allocated to fisheries above Bonneville with very little harvest to date.
5. The March/April non-treaty fisheries were expected to harvest approximately 55% of the non-treaty ESA allocation. Currently, harvest is tracking below planned levels.

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We are expecting the dam counts to significantly increase any day. We recognize the tribes are anxiously waiting for ceremonial fish to become available. We respect the cultural value of spring Chinook to the Columbia River tribes and assure you that we are committed to managing the remaining fisheries consistent with ESA and the 2008-2017 *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement.

We are hopeful that the run will be as strong as forecasted by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), enabling the tribes to secure expected C&S and commercial harvest levels and for the non-treaty fisheries above Bonneville to realize their expected opportunity. A recent TAC calculation indicates that the spring Chinook run would need to fall to less than 156,000 (just over half of forecast) for the March/April non-Indian fisheries to exceed the non-treaty ESA allocation.

We look forward to our continued work with the tribes through *U.S. v. Oregon* and the Columbia River Compact to ensure our respective fisheries are managed consistent with conservation objectives and treaty/non-treaty harvest allocations.

Sincerely;



Philip Anderson  
Interim Director  
Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife



Roy Elicker  
Director  
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife