

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting dates:	December 2, 2010, Commission Meeting
Agenda item #2:	Overview of State Hatchery System – Historical Context and Legal Foundation – (Briefing)
Staff Contact:	Heather Bartlett, Hatcheries Division Manager, Fish Program
Presenter(s):	Heather Bartlett, Hatcheries Division Manager, Fish Program

Background:

Hatcheries have operated in Washington State for more than a century, beginning with one hatchery on the Kalama River in 1895. Originally built to compensate for land use decisions that permanently altered large areas of fish-producing habitat, state hatcheries have since become an important part of the state's economy, releasing millions of fish annually for harvest by recreational and commercial fisheries. Almost all salmon hatchery production is linked to fulfilling state-tribal salmon management agreements or federal requirements for mitigation from habitat loss or damage. Tagging studies indicate that more than 75% of the salmon caught in Puget Sound and 90% of the salmon caught in the Columbia River originate from hatcheries, as do almost 90% of all steelhead.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) now operates 87 hatchery facilities, of which 75-80% are dedicated to producing salmon and/or steelhead and another 20-25% rear trout and other gamefish.

In recent years, state hatcheries also have taken on a new, equally important role in helping to recover and conserve the state's naturally-spawning salmon populations. Nearly all the hatcheries in the Columbia River and a number of hatcheries in Puget Sound play a role in wild fish rebuilding programs, whether by rearing juveniles prior to release or holding fish through their lifespan to ensure the survival of depressed stocks. This renewed focus on wild stock recovery represents a major realignment in hatchery operations, as WDFW, the tribes, federal government and independent scientists worked to develop a comprehensive operations strategy for hatcheries in Washington. Hatcheries are now viewed by fishery scientists and policy makers as integral tools for the restoration of wild runs that have dwindled because of habitat degradation or other factors. Over 20 hatcheries are involved in recovery actions for 17 currently-listed Endangered Species Act (ESA) stocks.

The state's hatchery system represents a public investment of over \$1-billion. Built as compensation for lost natural habitat, state operated hatcheries produce millions of fish for harvest every year, supporting fisheries and local economies from northern Puget Sound to the Columbia River. For an increasing number of depressed wild stocks, hatchery programs offer the best chance of survival. Over the years, WDFW has worked to protect the public's investment in state hatcheries and make the changes necessary to ensure they will continue to provide these benefits in the 21st Century.

Department staff will provide a series of three successive briefings to the Commission that:

1. Outline the historical context of the state's hatchery system and its associated obligations to fulfill state-tribal salmon management agreements or federal requirements for mitigation from habitat loss or damage;
2. Historical and contemporary hatchery production and associated economic value.
3. The paradigm shift in hatchery operations through implementation of hatchery reform and a status update on meeting the FWC Policy C-3619 Hatchery and Fishery Reform

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

None.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

N/A

Action requested:

None. Series of three successive briefings only.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A

Communications Plan:

N/A

Form revised 10/16/2008 - sdy