

Lower Columbia River HGMPs: Comments received via e-mail

1) Letter from Wild Steelhead Coalition website

<http://wildsteelheadcoalition.org/2012/09/comment-hatchery-plans-for-lower-columbia/>

To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)

Subject Comments for SF Toulte, EF Lewis, and Coweeman Rivers

I am writing you to express my opposition to the continued release of hatchery steelhead into the South Fork Toulte, Coweeman, and East Fork Lewis Rivers as outlined in the recent Lower Columbia River Hatchery Genetic Management Plans. Releasing non-native hatchery fish into watersheds without collection facilities conflicts with the departments own policies as outlined in the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan, and undermines the productivity of wild populations in these basins, jeopardizing the recovery of ESA listed Lower Columbia steelhead. The Hatchery Scientific Review Group for the Columbia has identified the East Fork Lewis, South Fork Toulte and Coweeman as primary populations, and set 5% as the acceptable threshold for the percentage of hatchery origin spawners (pHOS). WDFW's own estimates indicate that on average 70% of the spawning escapement in the Lewis consists of hatchery summer steelhead. While the department has reduced the number of fish released in the East Fork the absence of a hatchery collection facility in the basin means that even reductions in the size of hatchery releases will not bring the pHOS anywhere near HSRG guidelines.

Despite the lack of direct estimates of the % hatchery origin spawners in the South Fork Toulte and Coweeman the problem posed by the absence of collection facilities in these watersheds means that the threat posed by hatchery spawners to wild populations is likely very substantial. The HSRG identified each of these three watersheds as excellent candidates for Wild steelhead management zones, an alternative which I support. Almost every watershed in the Lower Columbia ESU receives releases of hatchery steelhead and salmon, and there are ample opportunities to harvest hatchery steelhead. Given the wealth of hatchery harvest opportunity provided elsewhere in the ESU, and the inability of these programs to meet the standards laid out in the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan and the HSRG the department should prioritize the recovery of wild steelhead in the South Fork Toulte, Coweeman and East Fork Lewis and discontinue hatchery releases in these systems.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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- 2) **From:** Kris Nelson [krisjn@earthlink.net]
Date: Tuesday, September 25, 2012 4:16:09 PM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Comments for SF Toulte, EF Lewis, and Coweeman Rivers

WSC letter plus

Are plans in motion to violate the steelhead recovery management plan? If so, why? Under whose authority? What use is the management plan if it's not implemented uniformly?

Kris Nelson
7140 SE Franklin St.
Portland, OR 97206

- 3) **From:** Nathan Johnson [n8bjohnson@gmail.com]
Date: Wednesday, September 26, 2012 1:05:14 AM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Comments for SF Toulte, EF Lewis, and Coweeman Rivers

WSC letter plus

I have fished the South Fork of the Toutle for years in the Winter and this past season was closed early due to decreased run size. Furthermore, I have caught hatchery steelhead in the winter when there should not be any there. This is putting stress on the native fish population in the river system and depressing escapement (which there are no goals for because the reds are not counted). Another issue with the hatchery program on the South Fork is that there is no where for the fish to go once they are in the system since there is no facility (fish trap). Once in the system they are trying to spawn if not caught and killed. This is not good practice when we need to be increasing native run sizes.

Nathan Johnson
6938 SW 4th Ave
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- 4) **From:** Gary Clark [gary_clark@fsafood.com]
Date: Sunday, September 30, 2012 7:38:41 AM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Comments for SF Toulte, EF Lewis, and Coweeman Rivers

WSC letter plus

Lets try saving some money and try a new directions please... 100 years of Hatchery productions has not saved one stream from the continued downward spiral of Native salmonids...

They first steelhead I ever landed on fly rod came on a spring morning on the East Fork of lewis just above Day break park. A magnificent WILD SPRING run fish. Very few of these fish are left.

- 5) **From:** Carolyn Ellertson [cellertson@kalama.com]
Date: Tuesday, October 02, 2012 3:27:17 PM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: fish management

Hello, AS always the sport fishing industry profits the most from solid management of fishing seasons, Boats,transportation, lodging, tackle, and all that goes with the costs benefit the public and private sectors. Yet the administration misses the point and fails to provide the consumers with long enough and best

periods of consumption. It is frustrating to deal with this short sighted production. Also Stop spending monies that will not maximize the production and benefits yo the consumers.

Dave

- 6) **From:** qball_59@hotmail.com
Date: Tuesday, October 02, 2012 5:24:00 PM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Lower Columbia River !

WE NEED TO STOP ALL COMMERCIAL NETTING ON THE COLUMBIA RIVER !, IT is so out of hand, our future depends on it. Please don't wait until it's too late. Thank you! Patrick FLanigan.

Sent from my Verizon Wireless Droid

- 7) **From:** Ed and Delly Rongey [eanddrongey@yahoo.com]
Date: Tuesday, October 02, 2012 7:28:18 PM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Salmon

First of all let me say there is no such thing as a wild salmon or wild steelhead in the Columbia. This is all being fed to the public by our Federal Government. I am 71 years old now and as a young man on the kalama river I would sometimes go to the lower hatchery. I would watch as they got what they called their quota of salmon or steelhead. They then would put up a fence made of just regular chicken wire on the little stream coming into the hatchery and no more fish could come in. Now do you honestly believe all these fish just up and died? No they went back into the kalama river and spawned. This gave us a mixture of hatchery fish and native fish "WILD" A lot of the hatcheries were built back in the 1930,s so this went on for a very long time. I am quite sure this went on at all the hatcheries on the Columbia River. Now forget all these Salmon and Steelhead that were mixed hatchery and native "WILD" This went on for years and years. Now comes the 1970,s and I am fishing by Lions Day Park in Woodland Wa. I have a Steelhead and a long comes a Game Warden a Mr. Suhadolnic rest his soul. He checks my fish and gets all excited saying I had caught a hatchery fish and he knew it was a hatchery fish because the adipose fin was clipped. Now I ask you how in the world could you honestly say a fish was WILD or hatchery they did not start clipping the adipose fin until the 1970,s. A little more when they built the dams on the Lewis River they destroyed the fish runs. I ask you where did they get the stock to restore the fish runs??? The myth that is trying to make people believe that the so called WILD fish fight harder than the hatchery is what it is a myth. The truth is the hen fights harder than the buck pound for pound. Has more desire to reproduce I believe.

- 8) **From:** Joe Reece [joereece@live.com]
Date: Monday, October 08, 2012 8:07:49 PM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Green River Summer Steelhead

I fish the Green River and would not like to see the steelhead program shut down. I have fished the river as kid and would like to see this program continued. Thank you.

- 9) **From:** Bob Margulis [bobmargulis@hotmail.com]
Date: Thursday, October 11, 2012 9:30:18 AM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: SF Toulte, EF Lewis, and Coweeman Rivers Comments

WSC letter plus

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the release of hatchery steelhead into the South Fork Toutle, Coweeman, and East Fork Lewis Rivers described in the recent Lower Columbia River HGMP. Frankly, I am astounded that WDFW would even think of releasing non-native hatchery fish in rivers without collection facilities. Significant interbreeding with the wild steelhead in these watersheds will occur and this just seems like a shortsighted approach that will make it harder for these ESA listed fish to recover. I've read that the Columbia HSRG identified the East Fork Lewis, South Fork Toutle and Coweeman as primary populations, setting 5% as the threshold for the percentage of hatchery origin spawners. And that WDFW's own estimates are ~70% of the spawning escapement in the Lewis consists of hatchery summer steelhead. While the department has reduced the number of fish released in the East Fork the absence of a hatchery collection facility in the basin means that even reductions in the size of hatchery releases will not bring the hatchery origin spawners anywhere near HSRG guidelines. Each of these three watersheds is an excellent candidate to become a wild steelhead management zone, as pointed out by the HSRG. I confess I can't understand why the WDFW would not do so. Is it your self-interest in hatcheries? Is it pressure by short-sighted fishermen who want abundant fisheries but are unwilling to make a short-term sacrifice to achieve that end? As someone who likes to fish at least as much as the next guy, and who would love to fish in rivers filled with wild steelhead, I am asking that you not move forward with the continuing release of hatchery fish into these rivers. We have examples of rivers in our state where hatchery release of steelhead was discontinued—and in each case they have fared well. Every place I fish that has strong fisheries, from British Columbia for steelhead to Montana and Idaho for trout—the fisheries are free from hatchery fish. And the local businesses are all grateful for it because people travel from all over the world to fish (and spend money) there. When was the last time that happened in Washington and what were our wild fish populations like then? Please give these fish a chance and discontinue hatchery releases in these systems.

Sincerely,

Bob Margulis
Seattle, WA

10) **From:** John Case [johnecase@hotmail.com]
Date: Thursday, October 11, 2012 9:40:51 AM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Comments for SF Toulte, EF Lewis, and Coweeman Rivers

Please cease hatchery production in these rivers where wild steelhead could once again thrive!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Case
1948 Boyer Ave.
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11) **From:** Blake Merwin [sales@gigharborflyshop.com]
Date: Saturday, October 13, 2012 8:13:49 PM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Comments for SF Toulte, EF Lewis, and Coweeman Rivers

I am sure by now you have received several emails from anglers and concerned citizens that are in support of the recommendations of the Wild Steelhead Coalition to not continue a mismanaged hatchery system on these Columbia tributaries. I also agree fully with the Wild Steelhead Coalition.

Additionally, as a fly fisher, guide, and fly shop owner, I would say that these recommendations from the Wild Steelhead coalition are not only better for the fish but they are better for business too. My customers are more interested in fishing for wild fish than hatchery reared fish. In fact, I constantly am asked by customers why the department seems to want to get rid of wild fish and/or why hatchery fish are so important. I don't have answers to these questions, just speculations.

Sport fishing is an economic engine and many of us depend on it for our income. Additionally, the money my customers spend to go fishing in addition to tackle (boats, motels, gas, food, etc) is an underrated and significant number.

Please redeploy funds from these hatchery programs to conservation programs. We can educate the public of Washington to the importance of wild fish and help grow a catch and release ethic like other states have done. The department could easily start by changing the tone of the posts on their facebook page. And that doesn't even cost anything!

Blake Merwin
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12) **From:** Robert Masonis [rmasonis@msn.com]
Date Sunday, October 14, 2012 4:38:16 PM
To: HGMP-LCRcomments (DFW)
Subject: Comments for SF Toulte, EF Lewis, and Coweeman Rivers

WSC letter plus

Moreover, extensive research conducted by Araki et al. on the Hood River demonstrates convincingly that hatchery fish have a much lower rate of reproductive success than wild steelhead, and should be kept off the spawning grounds if wild populations are to rebuild.

Robert Masonis
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