

Willapa Bay Public Meeting
November 13, 2019 6 pm – 8 pm
Raymond Elks Lodge, Raymond, WA

Staff: Chad Herring, Barbara McClellan, Ben Anderson, Carrie McCausland

Public: 28 Individuals

Chad Herring

- Opening statements
- Purpose tonight is to collect public input on hatchery production
- Powerpoint slideshow
- An outcome of the 2019 legislative session was that Phase I of the Naselle Hatchery rebuild was funded and that it is scheduled to break ground in the spring of 2020 and be completed by 2023. This is a total redesign.
- Nemah Hatchery is scheduled for an evaluation in the 2021-22 biennium. This is just an assessment of the facility to determine if anything more needs to be considered for Nemah Hatchery.

Public comment/suggestions/input

*What is the monthly budget for our hatcheries to operate?

*How many barrels of formalin did Nemah and Naselle Hatcheries have to use for Chinook treatment of ich?

- Forks Creek was cut back so much that it has destroyed the sport fishery. Forks Creek is the best hatchery for the sport fishery.
- Forks Creek is the best facility we have. The future is about eggtake. Need to restore Forks Creek in order to backfill our other facilities. The only way to get out of this problem is to crank up the Chinook production at Forks Creek in order to correct the problem of recreational priority on Chinook. Naselle has a problem until it's rebuilt. Move eggs from Naselle to Forks Creek right now to get Forks Creek up and running.
- Do away with the primary/contributing hatchery concept. Maximize production release at Forks Creek to 3.5 million Chinook, Naselle 5 million Chinook, Nemah maximize Chum production and get rid of Chinook production. This will result in a better return overall for the Willapa basin. Chum is a great forage fish for other species in the bay.
- Forks Creek Chinook surplus transfer 60% to Naselle and 40% keep at Forks Creek. Take the Chinook eggs currently in the Nemah Hatchery and split them 60% to Naselle Hatchery and 40% to Forks Creek. Increase Chum at Nemah, which has better survival and reduce Chinook mortality. Chinook returning to Nemah has been difficult due to low flows and warm water and results in more parasites, which increases Chinook mortality.
- Currently managing from a piece of paper (Willapa Policy) and based on priorities. Time to get away from the policy because what we are doing isn't working. Let managers manage the fish abundances not a piece of paper. We pick and choose

what we use from the policy. The Naselle Hatchery will be a better facility after the rebuild.

- Policy needs to change or removed. Can't manage or run a fishery on priorities. Can't be held to certain dates. Facilities should be run to full capacity. Eggs should be transferred to Naselle especially once facility is upgraded. Policy put us in this situation, and we need to stop using it. We don't need another hatchery run for just the recreational fishery. All facilities should be run for everyone not just for one sector. Maximize production. Everyone benefits. Nemah has issues with overcrowding.
- Surplus Chinook eggs at Forks Creek should be moved to Naselle Hatchery. Naselle should meet it's broodstock goal next year if you close the area below the Hwy 4 Bridge. Issue of priority in policy needs to go away. Need to manage for production in the future. Suggest that the Future Brood Document reflect that the Naselle be backfilled from Forks Creek.
- Support getting rid of the policy. Maximize production in Forks Creek. Get Naselle up to 5 million. Increase chum production in Nemah. Keep above area from Hwy 4 Bridge downstream closed in Naselle through Oct. 15.
- Get rid of the policy. Produce more fish. Need to do something about predators (seals, cormorants) when fish are released.
- Water temp is the best in Forks Creek, second in the Nemah and worst at the Naselle. Forks Creek Chinook eggs should probably stay in Forks Creek this year. We need to reorganize how we increase hatchery production. We should be back filling from Forks Creek as we increase production there. Until we meet our spawner escapement goals and our hatchery broodstock goals, there should be no targeted commercial catch until after Sept 15 anywhere in the bay.
- Failure to supply formalin at the Nemah Hatchery at the right rate constitutes gross negligence. None of the plans exposed today comply with HSRG standards. Over half of the sport fishery has been eliminated in this bay. Chum production increase is admirable but hatchery staff snagging fish from the river to get broodstock seems problematic. Even though there are cwt's going into Chinook at the Nemah, don't believe that this data will be very good. This entire thing seems to be aimed at removing the recreational fishery. Coho fishery in the Nemah River used to be good.
- Want to see fish back in Forks Creek to support the marine area fishery out of Tokeland.
- Policy should be dissolved because it was a biased Fish Commission that created it. The hatchery production constrains the commercial fishery. Would like to see the current Chinook eggs this year released from their current facilities without transfers. Chum reduction impacts the commercial fishery. Want to promote the increase of Chinook returning for both the recreational and commercial fishermen.

Additional discussion:

Formalin use at the Nemah Hatchery: Can't release water with formalin at the same rate at Nemah Hatchery than at the other facilities. We could only treat fish two days a week with formalin due to the affluent discharge requirement (Dept of Ecology permit) back into the river.

Use Chillers at Naselle Hatchery for Chinook. This is expensive.

Releasing additional coho reduces space for Chinook in the facilities.

Agency released spring Chinook in 2018 brood year and the agency has additional funding, but the agency did not have available spring chinook from Kalama this year.

*Naselle Hatchery does get backfilled for Chinook but not to the extent as Nemah Hatchery.

We need to evaluate what the Nemah was not what we want it to be. What is happening at Nemah Hatchery so that those fish just don't come back and die. What can the rivers actually hold? Hatcheries need to self-sustain themselves.

Current coho closure – recreational fishers will hook and release more coho just to get to steelhead or trout since those rules are still open. The problem with the policy is that we should be under the idea of conservation until all goals are met, which would have closed steelhead as well. It's time to really evaluate what we are doing.

There is not anyone here to answer questions about the hatcheries. We weren't provided enough information tonight for anyone who isn't up to speed with this data to provide a suggestion. Public is not well enough informed. You produced a plan that doesn't allow for a recreational fishery.

Need to straighten out Naselle Hatchery. Agree with issue of coho release and steelhead fishing.

We should have a selective recreational fishery with one hatchery coho retention with barbless hooks.

There are other locations around the bay that can have net pens used again. Better off shutting down everything until we make escapement. Not fair for one group to sit out or for the fish. Need to get the fish back.

Need to investigate other options that aren't as expensive such as UV light treatment or recycling water at the facilities due to low flow issues in the future. Its unfair that the recreational fishery has pay the penalty when the ocean and commercial fisheries have overharvested.

The policy is a non-binding guidance that is not enforceable. Without the policy, the agency would have killed the fisheries. Don't mix up the policy and the actions of the Dept. They are separate things.

* = data request