

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting dates:	December 14, Commission Meeting
Agenda item #4:	Status update on implementation of hatchery reform
Staff Contact:	Heather Bartlett, Hatcheries Division Manager, Fish Program
Presenter(s):	Heather Bartlett, Hatcheries Division Manager, Fish Program Christina Iverson, Hatcheries Division, Fish Program

Background:

Hatcheries have operated in Washington State for more than a century, beginning with the first 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. 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 about 90% of all steelhead. Contemporary economic reports estimate the contribution of hatchery salmon and steelhead fisheries to the state's economy to be just under \$70 million dollars.

Currently, the WDFW operates 83 hatcheries of which about three-quarters are dedicated to the propagation of salmon and steelhead. The remaining hatcheries propagate trout and other gamefish. Overall salmon and steelhead production by WDFW totals about 190 million juveniles.

As with all activities that can affect wild stocks, state hatcheries have come under intense review since the federal listing of salmon population groupings under the [Endangered Species Act](#) (ESA). While there are many hatchery programs that are acting to stabilize and even increase the abundance of depressed wild stocks, artificial production, in general, has been identified as one of the factors associated with the decline in natural populations of Pacific salmonids.

WDFW worked with federal natural resource agencies and the regional science panel, the [Hatchery Scientific Review Group](#) (HSRG), to identify ways to minimize adverse impacts of hatchery operations on depressed wild stocks, while contributing to sustainable fisheries. The HSRG conducted a comprehensive review of 178 hatchery programs and 351 salmon and steelhead populations in Puget Sound/Coastal Washington and the Columbia River Basin. The resulting population-specific recommendations are intended to provide scientific guidance for managing each hatchery more effectively in the future.

These ongoing efforts, including the Departments' initiative through [21 Century Salmon and Steelhead](#), the Fish and Wildlife Commission's adoption of their [Hatchery and Fishery Reform Policy](#) are all clear roadmaps for hatchery operations into the future in order to fulfill the dual role of harvest and conservation.

Implementation of these above initiatives relative to WDFW hatchery programs will occur through the development of Hatchery Action Implementation Plans (HAIP) and then be documented in Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans submitted for federal ESA coverage.

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.

In 2011, Department staff provided a three part series that described the scope of the state's hatchery system, including the historical and legal context for operations, the important economic value to the state, and the contemporary challenges we face with protecting our depleted natural populations, while providing fish to support sustainable fisheries.

We have experienced a paradigm shift in how we operate hatcheries, and the adoption of the FWC policy C-3619 helped catalyze the changes to achieve hatchery reform. This is an annual status update to the FWC relative to achieving the policy C-3619. In addition, it will be an opportunity for department staff to brief the FWC on the public process used to provide recommendations to department staff for implementing hatchery reform in the Puget Sound region.

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

None.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Puget Sound Hatchery Action Advisory Committee <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hatcheries/pshaac/>

Action requested:

None. Briefings only.

Draft motion language:

NA

Justification for Commission action:

NA

Communications Plan:

NA