

Summary

Meeting dates: August 2015, Commission Meeting

Agenda item: Salish Sea Program Review of Marine Survival of Salmon – Briefing

Presenter(s): Erik Neatherlin, Science Division Manager, Fish Program
Michael Schmidt, Program Director, Long Live the Kings
Barry Berejikian, Research Scientist & Behavioral Ecology Team Leader, NOAA Fisheries
Paul Hershberger, Research Scientist & Field Station Leader, USGS
Ken Warheit, Genetics Lab Director, Fish Program, WDFW

Background summary:

The Salish Sea Marine Survival Project is a \$20 million dollar, international, multi-disciplinary, ecosystem-based research effort to determine the most significant factors affecting juvenile salmon and steelhead survival in the Salish Sea. The Salish Sea encompasses Puget Sound, the Strait of Georgia, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca and supports approximately 3,000 species of marine life, including all seven species of Pacific salmon. The Salish Sea ecosystem has changed significantly over the last couple of decades including increasing water temperatures, increasing acidity, more harmful algae, the loss of forage fish and some marine commercial fishes, changes in marine plants, and increased seal and porpoise populations.

During this same time period Chinook, coho, and steelhead in the Salish Sea have experienced tenfold declines in survival during the marine phase of their lifecycle, and their total abundance remains well below what it was 30 years ago. Evidence suggests that salmon and steelhead along the coast and Columbia River are not experiencing these same trends suggesting further an issue in the Salish Sea. This concern, which initially raised red flags among the research scientist community has grown to an international effort being coordinated by two non-profit organizations, Seattle-based Long Live the Kings (LLTK) and Vancouver-based Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF).

This briefing will provide an overview of the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project which involves over 150 scientists and researchers from over 40 Federal and State agencies, Tribes, academia, and nonprofit organizations. The presentation will also include key findings from Puget Sound steelhead research funded by the Washington State Legislature.

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

None

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

None required

Action requested:

None, briefing only

Draft motion language:

NA

Justification for Commission action:

NA

Communications Plan:

NA

Commission Request to Department
"Blue Sheet"

Date of Request: January ~~December~~ Commission meeting

Title of Request: Marine Survival of salmon (Salish Sea Program)

Commissioner: Mahnken

Priority Level (put one check in each row):

Importance: [] High [X] Medium [] Low

Urgency: [] High [X] Medium [] Low

Request Due Date: After NOF

Knowledge or Action Being Requested (narrative). Describe what you want to know. Be specific.

Salmon & steelhead populations in Puget Sound have experienced tenfold declines in ocean survival. Under the guidance of WHTK, a group of 150+ scientists have initiated collaborative research to determine the cause(s) of these declines in Puget Sound. The commission is requesting a presentation by staff.

Output Requested (e.g., telephone call, memo, material from files, new report, presentation, other): *a presentation to commission to include a description of international (Canada) and national partnerships, sources of funding, research being conducted, objectives of research and progress to date*

For Commission Executive Assistant Use

Date Assigned: _____ Assigned To: _____
[At Debrief] [Program]