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July 30, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Tony Grover, Fish and Wildlife Division Director

SUBJECT: NOAA Fisheries update on the Columbia Basin Hatchery Environmental Impact Statement - Rob Jones, NOAA Fisheries

Previously, at the Council's March 2012 meeting, NOAA's former project lead, Allyson Purcell, briefed the Council on the draft of the '*Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to Inform Columbia River Basin Hatchery Operations and the Funding of Mitchell Act Hatchery Programs (Columbia Basin Hatchery EIS)*.'

The Hatchery EIS is now nearing completion and it is timely for NOAA to again brief the Committee on documents and timelines that will roll out in the near future. With that in mind NOAA has released the following information and will talk to the Committee about the EIS process and drafts. The lead presenter from NOAA will be Rob Jones, Hatcheries and Inland Fishery Branch Chief, who will be accompanied by Elizabeth Gaar.

Background/Project Timeline:

- NEPA and Columbia River Basin Hatcheries
- Project was initially started in 2004 to evaluate and inform NMFS's decisions over the distribution of hatchery funding under the Mitchell Act and to provide information that would advise and inform NMFS decisions, regarding Mitchell Act-funded hatcheries, under the Endangered Species Act
- EIS was expanded in 2009 to address all hatchery programs in the Basin
- 2010 release of draft EIS for public review and comment

The Draft EIS (DEIS):

- Released to public in August 2010
- Developed 5 draft NMFS policy directions (Alternatives), related to Columbia basin salmon and steelhead hatchery operations
- Contained analysis of the cumulative environmental effects of 5 draft Alternatives
- Series of public meetings and a 90 day comment period (extended to 120 days)
- Over 1,100 submitted comments from a wide range of constituencies—Tribes, Federal Agencies, commercial groups, recreational groups, utility districts, conservation groups, social justice groups, fishery commissions, etc

Since the DEIS:

- Thorough review of all comments, development of responses, and incorporation into current version of the document
- Complete update of baseline conditions, based on extended project timeline and as a result of review and comments to the DEIS
- Review and update of technical analysis with Columbia Basin tribes and state and federal technical experts
- Development of a Preferred Alternative (6th Alternative)
- Initial drafting of the final EIS (FEIS)

Proposed Schedule for Final EIS:

- NMFS expects to have the FEIS completed toward the end of 2013



NOAA
FISHERIES
Northwest
Region

NOAA Fisheries & Columbia Basin Hatcheries

August 6, 2013

Presentation to the Northwest Power and
Conservation Council

An underwater scene showing several fish swimming in clear, greenish water. The fish are of various species, including what appear to be salmon and trout. The lighting is natural, suggesting a deep-sea or river environment.

Today's Focus

- Update the status of the Columbia River Hatchery EIS
- Update the status of hatchery implementation including hatchery monitoring, evaluation, and research, across the basin



Status of the Columbia River Hatchery EIS

aka the Mitchell Act EIS

- The National Environmental Policy Act (of 1970) Requires all Federal Actions by Executive Branch Agencies to be reviewed for their Environmental Effects
- Initially, the scope of this environmental review was going to be limited to hatchery programs that traditionally receive Mitchell Act funding (the Federal Action)
- After the Public Scoping Process, the project scope was expanded to include all hatchery programs in the basin (i.e., the Federal action would not be limited to funding just the traditional programs)
- The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was Released to the Public in August of 2010 -- Over 1,100 Comments Received

Columbia River Basin Hatchery EIS cont.

- NMFS is drafting a final EIS (FEIS), including a Preferred Alternative, that:
 - Discloses the Benefits from Hatchery Production (Biologically, Culturally, and Economically)
 - Discloses the Negative Effects from Hatchery Production (Biologically)
 - Would Direct NMFS to Apply Stronger Performance Goals for Hatchery Programs that affect ESA-listed Populations Identified as Important to Recovery
 - Would Direct NMFS to Identify, in Hatchery Consultations, Hatchery Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research that would further the goals of the ESA

Columbia River Basin Hatchery EIS cont.

- Would allow for new hatchery programs, for either Conservation and/or Harvest purposes, as long as they were consistent with the goals of the Preferred Alternative
- Mitchell Act Funding could be used anywhere in the Columbia River Basin in support of hatchery programs that align with these Objectives

Period for Public Input on Conceptual Issues Has Closed

Next Steps:

- Currently confirming the accuracy of data, with the help of regional experts
- Expect to publish an FEIS on or about November 1
- Expect to complete a Record of Decision in 2013



Hatchery Implementation Across the Basin

➤ Update ◀

For the foreseeable future, hatcheries will play a vital role in mitigating for habitat loss, including operation of the hydropower system and the implementation of treaty rights.

NMFS is encouraging the action agencies that fund and operate hatchery programs to develop plans that harmonize mitigation goals, treaty rights, and the ESA and that monitor and evaluate hatchery performance and compliance and that reduce scientific uncertainty.



Hatchery Implementation Across the Basin

➤ Update ◀

Since November, when we last reported to you, ESA consultation has been completed or agreements have been reached on improvements to 31 Columbia Basin hatchery programs in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

This has been a collaborative effort between tribal, state, Federal, and PUD authorities

We would be glad to brief the Council, at your convenience, on how hatchery implementation is falling into place



Summary

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Questions