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October 29, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Jeff Allen, Idaho Council Office Director and Policy Analyst

SUBJECT: Update on the Redfish Lake Sockeye Hatchery in Springfield, ID.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game Assistant Fisheries Chief Paul Kline will provide an update on: 1) the completion of Springfield Hatchery and 2) how the new facility will change the implementation of the Snake River sockeye salmon recovery program.

For the past two decades since the ESA listing, a group of agencies including IDFG, NMFS, and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (SBT) have been collaboratively engaged in the captive broodstock-based gene rescue program to recover Snake River sockeye salmon. Funding for the program is primarily provided by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) through the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Columbia River Fish and Wildlife Program. The near-term goal of the program is to avoid extinction and to maintain population genetic diversity. The long-term goal is to rebuild the naturally-spawning population to facilitate de-listing and to increase population abundance to levels that could support sport and tribal harvest in the future.

To effectively address the program's long-term goal, the 73-acre Springfield Fish Hatchery site was purchased by the Bonneville Power Administration in 2010. Using a design-build approach, the IDFG worked with contractors to plan, design, and build a new hatchery capable of producing up to 1 M sockeye salmon smolts annually. The \$13.5 M facility is scheduled to be complete and ready to receive eggs in December, 2013. Annually, IDFG and NMFS broodstock hatcheries will provide eyed-eggs to Springfield. Smolts produced at Springfield will be transferred to the Sawtooth Valley each spring and released to the outlet of Redfish Lake. Adult sockeye salmon (produced from smolts reared at the new facility) will begin returning to Idaho in 2017.

From this point forward, the recovery program will follow a tiered approach to rebuild numbers of naturally-spawning sockeye salmon including: (1) increasing the number of anadromous adult sockeye that return to Idaho; (2) incorporating more anadromous returns in hatchery spawning designs and increasing natural spawning escapement; and (3) moving towards the development of an integrated conservation hatchery program that achieves the Hatchery Scientific Review Group-recommended proportionate natural influence (PNI) levels.

The proposed hatchery strategy is designed to address the key viable salmonid population parameters of abundance, spatial structure and diversity. The approach emphasizes improving abundance as the hatchery program transitions from the existing captive broodstock to a conventional hatchery program. This will be achieved by first focusing actions on Redfish Lake, the lake with the highest sockeye production potential. Improvements in spatial structure and sockeye life-history diversity will be gained by implementing hatchery actions to restore natural production in two additional lakes, Pettit and Alturas.

Chronology of relevant events:

- November, 2010: The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) submits the Snake River Sockeye Program - Springfield Sockeye Hatchery Master Plan (Step 1 Document) to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (Council).
- April, 2011: The Council approves the Master Plan and authorizes IDFG to move forward with the next steps required under the Major Projects Review Process.
- April, 2012: IDFG submits combined Step 2 and Step 3 Documents to the Council.
- June, 2012: The Council approves the project to go to construction.
 - Approval to initiate fish culture operations at Springfield Hatchery is conditioned on IDFG providing additional clarification on several ISRP comments prior to the start of hatchery operations in December, 2013. This request will be satisfied.
- June, 2012: Construction at the Springfield site begins.
- September 6, 2013: Official dedication of Springfield Hatchery. Over 150 people attend celebration.
- December 2, 2013: Estimated ship date of first ESA-listed sockeye salmon eyed-eggs to Springfield Hatchery.
- May, 2015: Estimated ship date of first cohort of “Springfield smolts” to Redfish Lake Creek for release.
- July, 2017: Estimated return date of first cohort of “Springfield adults” to Redfish Lake as 4-yr olds.