



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
October 12, 2018

EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Youth Hunts

The rites of fall are expressed through cooler days and cold nights, elk bugling, steelhead fishing, archery season and youth pheasant hunts. This year youth pheasant hunts were held at Ladd Marsh, Klamath, White River, and Irrigon wildlife areas, and on private land near Madras and John Day. While staff are still tallying participation, we generally have more than 300 kids participate in these East Region events. On average, hunters harvest one bird.



The youth pheasant hunts wouldn't be a success without the support of many groups including various Oregon Hunter's Association Chapters,

Hunter Education Instructors, small businesses, landowners and volunteer dog handlers in addition to the parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters that take the time to make each youth hunter's experience a success. Without these energetic and supportive volunteers, staff would never be able to pull off these events. We are very thankful for the extra birds purchased by various organizations, for the donuts and coffee provided in the morning, hamburgers and hot dogs provided in the afternoon, and shotgun clinics designed to hone shooting skills and instill firearm safety.

Semi-Natural Pond Rearing

Over a million hatchery steelhead smolts are released into the Grande Ronde Basin each year. Adults returning from these releases provide important tribal and sport fisheries. Survival to adulthood of these releases fluctuate annually but average about 1.5%, a value that is neither poor nor exceptional. Given the significant cost to operate hatcheries and monitor the performance of released fish, ODFW routinely investigates creative rearing methods to improve fish survival.

Empirical evidence recently suggested juveniles grown and released from semi-natural ponds might have better survival than those grown and released from concrete raceways. To evaluate semi-natural pond rearing we collaborated with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to compare it with conventional raceway rearing. The WDFW rear steelhead in a two (2) acre earthen bottom pond lined with rip-rap, and acclimate them two months prior to an April release in a similar earthen pond located alongside the lower Grande Ronde River. In contrast, ODFW rear smolts in conventional concrete raceways and acclimate them for two months in a concrete acclimation raceway before release in April.

For this study we employed a fully crossed experimental design, meaning smolts reared by ODFW (in raceways) were acclimated and released from WDFW's semi-natural acclimation pond and ODFW's concrete acclimation raceway, and WDFW reciprocated by also releasing their smolts (reared in a semi-natural pond) using the same two acclimation locations.



While juvenile steelhead were being reared, Fish and Wildlife Service physiologists determined whether fish from the two hatcheries were developing similarly. Surprisingly, they found only slight differences in the physiological profiles of the different groups. Following smolt release we tracked their downstream survival and again were surprised to find no significant differences in their movement. Adult steelhead from this study began returning to the Columbia River in 2016 and will continue through 2021. Initial adult return suggest that steelhead reared in semi-natural ponds survive to adulthood at more than twice the rate of conventionally reared fish, regardless of whether they were acclimated in the semi-natural pond or the concrete raceway. We also measured similar adult survival of ODFW's raceway reared fish released from the semi-natural pond and the concrete acclimation raceway.

Hatchery programs across the Pacific Northwest have been closely examined to determine whether adult return goals are being met in a cost effective manner. Early results from this study

suggest that growing juvenile steelhead in semi-natural ponds may be a more effective method for producing adult fish than conventional raceway rearing. However, converting concrete acclimation facilities to semi-natural ponds would not improve adult returns. Our results also challenge the widely held belief that measuring the downstream migration survival of steelhead smolts is useful for gaging adult returns; thus, researchers may want to reconsider the amount of resources devoted to this monitoring effort.

WEST REGION

Bernadette Graham- Hudson, Region Manager

Fern Ridge Wildlife Area hunts

The annual Youth Upland Bird Hunt was held September 8-9. Although attendance was relatively light, hunters who participated seemed to have an enjoyable experience with good weather and habitat conditions that were conducive to effective pursuit of the surprisingly wily pheasants. Staff released 200 pheasants for the weekend with the following statistics:

- Saturday Sept. 8 – 29 hunters; 96 hours; 22 pheasants
- Sunday Sept. 9 – 26 hunters; 62 hours; 31 pheasants

The Western Oregon Fee Pheasant Hunt followed the youth hunt and kicked off on Monday, September 10. Hunter numbers appeared to be consistent with those of past years for the first week of the hunt, and slightly cooler weather may have actually increased participation.

Cedar Creek Hatchery Spring Chinook Roundup

Cedar Creek Hatchery completed another successful Spring Chinook Roundup in 2018. The event took place on September 10th, and included approximately 35 volunteers. The volunteers involved were a mixture of ODFW employees seeking a cross training opportunity, and enthusiastic public volunteers looking for the opportunity to give back to a resource they are extremely passionate about.

The main purpose of the Spring Chinook Roundup is to collect spring Chinook that have

used the “Barrier Pool” below the Three Rivers weir as a resting area through the summer months. This involves seining the pool and handling the fish in the river, which is an undertaking that necessitates a good number of volunteers and staff.



The main objectives of this annual endeavor includes two steps: first, the removal of all hatchery spring Chinook from the pool to be used for egg production to meet facility program goals, and humanly dispatch and use any excess for stream enrichment. Removing these hatchery fish greatly reduces the amount of competition with the wild population of spawning adults above the Three Rivers weir; second, passing all wild/naturally produced fish (spring Chinook and coho) above the Three Rivers weir to reach optimum spawning grounds in the upper portion of Three Rivers and its tributaries.

Rogue River flow augmentation

Flow augmentation in the Rogue with releases from Lost Creek Reservoir were implemented in late August and early September to minimize pre-spawning mortality in adult fall Chinook.

The objective is to get the release from the reservoir down to 1200 cfs quickly to protect spring Chinook redds from dewatering during incubation. It also minimizes the number of fall Chinook spawning in spring Chinook habitat in the upper Rogue. More information on Rogue River spring Chinook is posted in the October Conservation Field Report.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Administrator

Thousands of citizens visited the ODFW exhibit at the State Fair. Visitors learned about shellfish biology as well as harvest methods; fish passage, invasive species and fish identification. Many Latino families visited on Sundays, which the fair designates as La Familia Day. ODFW made materials accessible in Spanish via QR codes that people used with their smart phones.

I&E coordinated with Travel Oregon to increase awareness of the food-related benefits of hunting and fishing before and during Feast Portland, a renowned “foodie” event drawing thousands of people to Portland each year. This year, members of the food press attended a media event at Netarts Bay, where they dug clams and sampled numerous dishes made with the delicious bivalves. ODFW got great social media engagement from that event. During Feast, people sampled farm-raised elk and trout, to get a taste of what they could harvest in Oregon’s wild places. Surveys have shown that wild-caught food is a major motivator for people considering hunting and fishing for the first time.

I&E continues to expand our marketing efforts to engage newcomers to our state to buy licenses and go enjoy the outdoors. Recently, we received email addresses from people new to our state who requested the Portland Relocation Guide. We sent emails to people who are moving to Portland and who expressed an interest in outdoor recreation when they requested the relocation guide. Our email messages promoting fishing opportunities near the Portland area garnered open and click-through rates well above industry standards.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

Southwest Region

A Fish and Wildlife (F&W) trooper from the Lakeview office received information from Lake County Sheriff’s Office of a trespass in progress near Paisley. The trooper responded to the scene and located a group of hunters still on the property with a deer. The landowner requested to

press charges so the deer, ice chest with the deer meat, and bow were seized. The hunter was cited for *Hunting in Violation of Trespass*. While on scene, another member of the party was fishing the nearby river. The subject returned with six trout which was three times daily limit. Several of the fish were also undersize. The angler was criminally cited for *Exceeding Daily Catch Limit*. While unloading the deer meat 12 additional fish were located with many being undersize. Lake County Sheriff's Office and a patrol trooper assisted on scene.

Northwest Region

F&W troopers from the Astoria office conducted a nighttime deer decoy operation in the Clatsop State Forest off Highway 26. A vehicle stopped at the decoy and the driver got out and shot an arrow at the decoy. The driver then tried to shoot a second arrow at the decoy, but hit himself in the face with the bow string and almost shot himself in the foot. The driver was cited for *Hunt Prohibited Hours* and his bow was seized.



A Newport area Trooper received an anonymous tip regarding an archery hunter who had killed two elk during the archery season. Upon investigation, it was determined the hunter had killed the second elk and had used an ex-girlfriend's tag to validate the elk. The ex-girlfriend subsequently admitted to giving her tag to the shooter after he shot the elk for her. The male was cited criminally for *Exceeding Bag Limit of Game Mammal*, and both the male and female were criminally cited for *Lend, Borrow, or Sale of Big Game Tag*. The spike elk antlers, meat, tag, bow, and arrow used were seized as evidence.

East Region

District ODFW staff contacted Oregon State Police (OSP) F&W trooper in Baker City regarding a collared deer that they were receiving a mortality signal. ODFW and OSP went to the last known location of the deer, in the Sumpter Unit and could not locate a signal for the collar. However, they did locate a fresh mule deer hide and a butchered ribcage. Ultimately, they were able to determine that a hunter harvested a collared mule deer doe and took the deer and the collar back to Springfield. The hunter returned the collar to ODFW in Springfield where they recorded the hunter's name. With the hunter's information from ODFW, an OSP F&W sergeant in Springfield contacted the subject and determined he had illegally harvested a doe deer and so had his hunting partner. The subjects said they had misinterpreted the regulations and thought they could harvest does. The two does were seized and each subject was cited for *Unlawful Take/Possession of Doe Deer Closed Season*.

Marine Fisheries Team

Members of the Marine Fisheries Team conducted boat patrols on the Pacific Ocean over a three (3) day period from Florence to Coos Bay. During the patrol, they issued multiple citations for *Angling Prohibited Method-Barbed Hooks and Angling with More Than One Rod or Line*. They also issued various warnings for *Failing to Immediately Validate Harvest Card and Improperly Validating Harvest Card*.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

One of the primary objectives of the Rogue River Spring Chinook Conservation Plan, adopted by the Commission in 2007, is to restore the early returning, early spawning spring chinook population. This life history trait was lost after Lost Creek Dam construction and operation, as determined by dam evaluation studies in the 1980s and 1990s. According to Cole Rivers' observations in the early 1940s, the first spring chinook began spawning September 1 near McLeod on the Rogue River.

We are happy to report that early spawning by spring chinook was observed again this year. The first returns of wild four-year-old adult spring chinook produced under the conservation plan began in 2012, and one year later, staff observed a surprising number of redds in early September.



Female spring chinook digging redds along the bank at Rogue Elk

With the exception of 2015, staff floats the upper Rogue River every year and has found spring chinook redds and spawning fish as early as August 30. Most surveys took place the first week of September. Staff plans to continue this survey as a STEP project into the future.

Coast Coho Business Plan

A public-private partnership convened in 2014 to develop a “business plan” for coast Coho to:

- Promote conservation and recovery of coast Coho in Oregon and describe the essential role of voluntary habitat protection and restoration efforts.
- Identify the highest priority projects required at the population (watershed) scale to advance regional recovery goals.
- Aggregate the cumulative costs and anticipated benefits of these projects and coordinate funding to support locally led implementation.

The Coast Coho Partnership (the Partnership) includes ODFW staff, Oregon Watershed

Enhancement Board (OWEB), National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center, Wild Salmon Center, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

The Coho Business Plan outlines population specific high priority conservation and recovery actions generated through a planning process with local communities using a science-based framework to develop a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for a local coho population.

In 2015, the Partnership began developing SAPs for three pilot watersheds, the Nehalem, Siuslaw, and Elk Rivers with supported funding from OWEB. The final Siuslaw Coho SAP is expected to be released by early October, the Elk River in November 2018, and the Nehalem in mid-2019.

This year the NFWF provided the Siuslaw, Elk, and Nehalem with \$200,000 each to implement shovel-ready conservation and restoration actions identified in the draft SAPs. NFWF is again providing this same funding for 2019 implementation.

Developing the Coos, Siletz, and Upper Rogue SAPs kicked off in 2018 and should be completed in about 16 months. NOAA contributed funds to use emerging remote sensing technology to strengthen the baseline information contributing to the science-based framework these SAPs are being built around.

The Partnership is trying to annually select up to three additional coho populations for developing SAPs. Selections are based on “letters of interest” submitted by local partner organizations working on the coast and participation is voluntary. SAPs not only help conserve and recover Oregon coastal coho, they help communities maintain drinking water quality, mitigate flood impacts, and protect working lands.

OCEAN SALMON AND COLUMBIA RIVER PROGRAM

Tucker Jones, Ocean Salmon and Columbia River Program Manager

New Pacific Salmon Treaty Agreement

The Pacific Salmon Treaty of 1985 provides the framework for coordination of fishery management between the United States and Canada; outlining the shared responsibility of conserving Pacific salmon in order to achieve optimum production, to set mutually agreeable harvest levels, and to prevent overfishing, so that each country benefits from its salmon management investments.



Specific Treaty provisions regarding Chinook, coho, chum and pink salmon management are reviewed and updated every ten years, with a new 2019 – 2028 agreement currently being finalized. During the last two years of negotiations, the Pacific Salmon Commission was confronted with a dynamic new environment, characterized by wide swings in ocean survival rates, and distribution patterns, and continued declines in productivity, particularly for Chinook stocks in the Salish Sea in Washington and Upper Georgia Strait stocks in British Columbia. The plight of Southern Resident Killer Whales in Puget Sound, which depend upon Chinook for prey, is another example of the challenges laying before resource managers.



One of the most significant aspects of the new agreement pertains to Chinook management, in particular Puget Sound and Columbia Basin stocks listed under the United States Endangered Species Act (ESA). Many of these stocks migrate north and are caught in southeast Alaskan and British Columbian commercial and recreational fisheries.

Under the new agreement, in years of low abundance Chinook catches in the southeast Alaska and Canadian fisheries will be reduced from recent levels by up to 7.5 and 12.5 percent respectively. The agreement also includes provisions in other west coast fisheries to ensure that harvest levels remain strongly tied to stock conservation objectives. Because of these changes to the fishery management regime, abundances of several Chinook stocks returning to Oregon waters are expected to increase.

Investing in the Future

Efforts to implement the new Treaty provisions will require funding appropriations by the United States Congress.

Among other projects, and consistent with previous agreements, federal investments will be used to restore and protect fish habitat, maintain and improve conservation hatchery programs, and ensure effective implementation of mark-selective fisheries. The funding will also be critical to the science and stock assessment improvements needed to manage complex inter-jurisdictional fisheries successfully.

**END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR
October 12, 2018**