

TAC Statement to Compact March 4, 2003

On March 3, TAC met with representatives of WDFW involved with the long term mortality study for spring chinook and with a representative of S.P. Cramer and Associates at private consulting firm. SP Cramer and Associates were retained by Salmon For All to review the experimental design and results of the 2001 and 2002 long term mortality studies.

Ray Beamesderfer of Cramer and Associates presented a seven page summary report. TAC and the WDFW researchers discussed the report and had a fairly thorough discussion of both the report and the research in general. In general the consultants expressed a positive impression of the study. Given the time constraints of their review, the consultants were not able to analyze all possible aspects of the data.

Key points of our discussion include:

1. The researchers have recently included 100 more tags that were returned from the Fish and Wildlife Service. The inclusion of these additional data have changed the mortality estimates from that which was reported previously. The currently reported release mortality from 4 ½" gear for 2001 is 11.9% and in 2002 is 32.2%. The simple average of the two rates is 22%. TAC is uncertain if there may be more small changes to the estimates as the researchers double check and finalize their calculations.
2. The wide differences in the results of the 2001 and 2002 studies remain difficult to reconcile.
3. The consultants have made several suggestions for additional analysis that the researchers can do that may help resolve some aspects of the results.
4. It appears that neither year can be discounted at this time. There are reasonable arguments as to why either may be a more accurate result.
5. There are differences among TAC members regarding a possible adjustment that could be made because of possible differences between test and control fish. There are reasons to assume that the test fish were subject to certain mortality below Bonneville Dam that the control fish had already survived. These include sport fishery mortality, marine mammal predation, and passage mortality associated with finding the fish

ladders and reaching as far as the Bonneville Trap. The researchers have suggested the possibility of using a five percent correction based on results of University of Idaho radio telemetry data. TAC has not had the opportunity to review any of these data or reports. Some TAC members, while open to the idea of a correction, are not sure if 5% would be the appropriate amount. At this time TAC has not reached consensus on this issue and is not currently making a recommendation for an adjustment.

6. TAC struggled with how to utilize these numbers in making a recommendation. We discussed the concept of incorporating some flexibility in our recommendation to address the idea that neither year can be completely discounted. We were unable to find a way to do this in a meaningful way based strictly on the data available. In general TAC tries to make recommendations based on the data available and tries not to make a “conservative” recommendation. TAC feels it is the managers rather than the technical staff’s responsibility to build the appropriate level of conservatism into the management. TAC did discuss the possibility that our recommendation is conservative. It may be depending on numerous possible interpretations of the studies and about how the studies relate to actual commercial fisheries. However, some of the results do indicate relatively high release mortality rates and we do not feel that these or the results indicating lower mortality can be excluded.
7. As a result, TAC does not think there is sufficient reason to make a recommendation different than our previous recommendation of 25% for chinook released from tangle net gear and 50% for chinook released from gill net gear. We have also not changed our recommendations for the release mortality rates for steelhead of 20% for steelhead released from 4 1/2” gear and 35% for steelhead released from 8” gear.
8. TAC does recommend that whatever release mortality rates that are adopted by the states, that they be used throughout the remaining 2003 spring season fisheries. The researchers will be continuing to work on their analysis and there may be some preliminary data trickling in from the 2003 research. TAC thinks that at this point it would be unfairly disruptive to the fishery to attempt to make minor adjustments in rates every time a new calculation is made. TAC intends to review the 2001 and 2002 analysis as it is finalized and to review the results of the 2003 research as it is made available. We also intend to review any data or reports that are available regarding any potential appropriate adjustment for mortality below Bonneville.