



YAKIMA KLICKITAT FISHERIES PROJECT

YAKAMA NATION FISHERIES
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August 16, 2011

Will Atlas, Co-Chair
Steelhead Committee
Federation of Fly Fishers
5237 US Hwy 89 South, Suite 11
Livingston, MT 59047

Dear Mr. Atlas:

In the May 2011 issue of *The Osprey*, and in a subsequent blog post, you commented on fish propagation programs being developed and conducted by the Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project (YKFP). The YKFP is a cooperative effort by the Yakama Nation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to restore anadromous fish populations for both conservation and harvest purposes. You noted in your comments that it is crucial that the tribe and the state address the impacts of hatcheries on wild salmon and steelhead. We understand and appreciate your efforts to protect and promote wild salmon and steelhead conservation. The co-managers believe the proposed changes to hatchery production in the Klickitat Basin envisioned in the preferred NEPA DEIS alternative will contribute directly to that objective that we mutually share (see below).

The Yakama Nation also appreciates your acknowledgement of its treaty rights and its efforts to promote harvest in accordance with those treaty rights. It is certainly true that increasing the abundance of natural spawning populations through supplementation provides for tribal harvest consistent with promises made to the Yakama Nation by the United States.

However, we hope you understand that YKFP production strategies are driven by more than just a bare desire to exercise treaty rights. The tribe's very identity, cultural values and subsistence are tied to the harvest of salmon and steelhead. The Yakama people are fish Indians.

We would all prefer to have natural production of wild stocks in the Columbia Basin be sufficient to support sport and treaty harvest, while still achieving stock conservation and preserving ecosystem function. However, development and historical fisheries management activities have decimated wild fish stocks and reduced ecological productivity. The Yakama Nation is a leader in implementing changes to past management practices to protect and promote the fitness and viability of natural fish populations as a part of the tribe's heritage.

Through the YKFP, the tribe and WDFW work as co-managers to achieve the abundance necessary for tribal and state harvest goals while promoting productivity, genetic diversity and broad distribution of natural stocks within the Yakima and Klickitat watersheds. This strategy requires the use of state-of-the-art propagation methods and adaptive management.

Furthermore, the monitoring and evaluation aspects of the program that drive adaptive management decisions are based on a recognition of the scientific uncertainties associated with supplementation and integrated broodstock-based production strategies. These efforts also embrace the importance of not sacrificing long term natural population fitness for the sake of short term demographic improvements and the associated harvest. The YKFP production programs are also founded on careful consideration of ecological interactions associated with fish propagation and release, and the promotion of ecosystem health.

The result is a very complex program for production, habitat protection and restoration, and monitoring and evaluation of the effects of program activities on naturally spawning fish stocks in both subbasins. We invite you to discuss all aspects of this complex program and the scientific literature that is its foundation with YKFP biologists and managers.

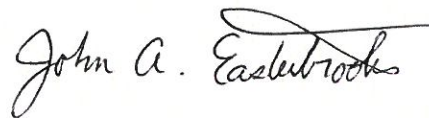
We understand your comments concerning fall Chinook and coho production in the Klickitat subbasin, and have proposed measures to lessen the ecological interactions between those stocks and spring Chinook and steelhead populations (including increased geographic separation between native and non-native stocks, and possible future reductions in non-native juvenile releases). It is crucial to note that the fall Chinook and coho production are essential elements of production agreed to by the litigants in *United States v. Oregon* to resolve Indian treaty fishing rights claims. *United State v. Oregon* is a federal district court case initiated in 1964 that resulted in the court-administered development of the *Columbia River Fish Management Plan* that governs anadromous fish production and harvest in the basin. Until natural population restoration goals are achieved to an extent that can support treaty harvest rights, fish managers must continue harvest augmentation production consistent with *United States v. Oregon* obligations. We hope you will support treaty-based fish production in the Klickitat toward that end. More particularly, we ask for your support of our efforts to achieve those obligations in a manner that minimizes impacts to natural populations and ecosystem values, such as those proposed in the Klickitat Anadromous Fish Master Plan and analyzed in the Bonneville Power Administration's Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Klickitat Hatchery Complex.

We thank you again for your efforts to conserve natural salmon and steelhead populations. As noted, we invite you to discuss these issues with YKFP biologists, and welcome input and perspective that will help us to best achieve our array of biological, policy and treaty goals and responsibilities. The Yakama Nation's chief scientist for the YKFP is David Fast, who can be reached at 509-945-8460. The WDFW lead scientist for the project is Andrew Murdoch (509-664-3418).

Sincerely,



Melvin R. Sampson
YKFP Policy Advisor
YKFP Policy Representative



John A. Easterbrooks
WDFW Regional Fish Program Manager
YKFP Policy Representative