Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7(a)(2) Biological Opinion, and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Consultation.

Opinion on the Issuance of Twelve Scientific Research Permits Affecting Seven Salmonid Species in the Interior Columbia River Basin Beginning in 2017

NMFS Consultation Number: WCR-2017-6413

Action Agencies: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)
The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Affected Species and Determinations:

Listed Species	Status	Likely to Adversely affect Species or Critical Habitat?	Likely to Jeopardize the Species?	Likely to Adversely Affect Critical Habitat?	Likely to Destroy or Adversely Modify Critical Habitat?
Upper Columbia River (UCR) Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha)*	**Endangered**	**Yes.**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**
UCR Steelhead (*O. mykiss*)	**Threatened**	**Yes.**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**
Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon (*O. tshawytscha*)	**Threatened**	**Yes.**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**
Snake River fall Chinook Salmon (*O. tshawytscha*)	**Threatened**	**Yes.**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**
Snake River Steelhead (*O. mykiss*)	**Threatened**	**Yes.**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**
Snake River Sockeye Salmon (*O. nerka*)	**Endangered**	**Yes.**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**
Middle Columbia River (MCR) Steelhead (*O. mykiss*)	**Threatened**	**Yes.**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**
Southern Resident Killer Whales (*Orcinus orca*)	**Threatened**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**	**No.**

Fishery Management Plan that Describes EFH in the Project Area	Does Action Have an Adverse Effect on EFH?	Are EFH Conservation Recommendations Provided?
Pacific Coast Salmon	**No.**	**No.**

Consultation Conducted By: National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Region

Issued By:

FOR Barry Thom
Regional Administrator

Date: March 31, 2017

Administrative File: 151422WCR2017PR00060

Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Introduction section provides information relevant to the other sections of this document and is incorporated by reference into Sections 2 and 3 below.

1.1 Background

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) prepared this biological opinion (opinion) in accordance with section 7(b) of the ESA of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 402. It constitutes our review of 12 proposed scientific research permit applications and is based on information provided in the applications for the proposed permits, published and unpublished scientific information on the biology and ecology of listed salmonids in the action areas, and other sources of information.

We also completed an Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation on the proposed actions. It was prepared in accordance with section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)(16USC 1801, et seq.) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 600.

We completed pre-dissemination review of this document using standards for utility, integrity, and objectivity in compliance with applicable guidelines issued under the Data Quality Act (section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001, Public Law 106-554). The document will be available through NMFS' Public Consultation Tracking System. A complete record of this consultation is on file with the Protected Resources Division in the Portland, Oregon office of NMFS's West Coast Region: 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd, Portland, Oregon 97232.

1.2 Consultation History

The Protected Resources Division (PRD) of NMFS's West Coast Region received 12 applications to conduct scientific research in the Pacific Northwest. Ten of the applications are to renew previously approved work, one is to modify previously approved work, and one is for entirely new work. The applicants and the associated permit numbers are laid out in the following table.

Table 1. The Applications (and their Associated Applicants) Considered in this Biological Opinion.

Permit Number	***Applicant***
1175 – 9R	The Gifford Pinchot National Forest
1339 – 4R	The Nez Perce Tribe
1341 – 5R	The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
1386 – 9R	The Washington Department of Ecology
1465 – 4R	The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
1598 – 4R	The Washington Department of Transportation
16069 – 2R	The City of Portland
16446 – 2R	The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
16521 – 2R	The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
16866 – 3R	The Oregon State University
18696 – 2M	The Idaho Power Company
20492	The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Because the permit requests are similar in nature and duration and are largely expected to affect the same listed species, we combined them into a single consultation pursuant to 50 CFR 402.14(c). Three of the applications are for (largely) new work and the other three are seeking to renew permits that have previously been approved. As noted on the cover page, the affected species are upper Columbia River (UCR) spring Chinook, UCR steelhead, Snake River (SR) spr/sum Chinook, SR fall Chinook, SR sockeye, and middle Columbia River (MCR) steelhead (and their critical habitat).

Because they may affect listed Chinook salmon, the proposed actions also have the potential to affect southern resident killer whales and their critical habitat by diminishing the whales' prey base. However, we concluded that because the proposed activities would have such an insignificant effect on that prey base, they were not likely—even in combination—to adversely affect SR killer whales or their critical habitat. The full analysis for this conclusion is found in the "Not Likely to Adversely Affect" determination section (2.11).

We received the first permit request (Permit 1175 – 9R) in the form of an application on March 22, 2016; the other applications came in over the following six months. When the applications arrived, we determined that all were incomplete to greater or lesser degrees. After communicating with the applicants, all the applications were determined to be complete and we published notice in the *Federal Register* asking for public comment on the applications—81 FR 74769 (October 27, 2016) and 81 FR 76565 (November 3, 2016). All of this took place after a period of pre-consultation. The public was then given 30 days to comment on the applications after each publication and, once that period closed, we initiated consultation on November 4, 2016. The full consultation histories for the 12 actions are not directly relevant to this analysis and so are not detailed here. That history is documented in the docket for this consultation, which is maintained by the PRD in Portland, Oregon.

1.3 Proposed Federal Actions

“Action” means all activities or programs of any kind authorized, funded, or carried out, in whole or in part, by Federal agencies (50 CFR 402.02). When an analyzing the effects of the action, we also consider the effects of other activities that are interrelated or interdependent with the proposed action. Interrelated actions are those that are part of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification. Interdependent actions are those that have no independent utility apart from the action under consideration (50 CFR 402.02). In this instance, we found no actions that are interrelated to or interdependent with the proposed research actions. In the absence of any such actions, the proposed action here is NMFS’s proposal to issue permits to the various applicants.

Therefore we are proposing to issue 12 separate research permits pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA. The permits would variously authorize researchers to take endangered UCR spring Chinook, threatened UCR steelhead, threatened SR spr/sum Chinook, threatened SR fall Chinook, threatened SR steelhead, endangered SR sockeye, and threatened MCR steelhead. “Take” is defined in section 3 of the ESA; it means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect [a listed species] or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. The analysis here therefore examines the take that may affect the evolutionarily significant units (ESUs) and distinct population segments (DPSs) that are the subject of this opinion.[1] In addition to this biological opinion, we are writing separate biological opinions to cover species from the lower Columbia River and portions of western Washington and Oregon. Those opinions (WCR-2016-4787, and WCR-2016-5949) will evaluate some of the take proposed in in the applications for Permits 1175 – 5R, 1386 – 9R, 1598 – 4R, 16069 – 2R, 16866 – 3R, and 20492 We will only issue those permits after all the analyses are complete and we have signed all the controlling biological opinions.

Permit 1175–9R

The Gifford Pinchot National Forest (GPNF) is seeking to renew for five years a research permit that currently allows them to take juvenile PS Chinook salmon, PS steelhead, MCR steelhead, LCR Chinook salmon, LCR coho salmon, and LCR steelhead in the Middle Columbia-Hood and Puyallup subbasins (Washington). The purpose of this research is to describe fish species

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[1] An ESU of Pacific salmon (Waples 1991) and a DPS of steelhead (71 FR 834) are considered to be “species” as the word is defined in section 3 of the ESA. In addition, we use the terms “artificially propagated” and “hatchery” interchangeably in the opinion (and the terms “naturally propagated” and “natural”).

presence, distribution, spawning areas, and habitat conditions on lands that the GPNF administers. The GPNF and other agencies would use that information in forest management, habitat restoration, and species recovery efforts. The GPNF proposes to use backpack electrofishing and seines to capture juvenile salmonids, hold fish for short periods in aerated buckets, identify, and then release the fish. The researchers do not propose to kill any fish, but a small number may die as an unintentional result of research activities.

Permit 1339 – 4R

The Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) under the authorization of the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) is seeking to renew for five years its permit to annually take adult and juvenile SR spr/sum Chinook salmon and SR steelhead while conducting research in a number of the tributaries to the Imnaha River (Cow, Lightning, Horse, Big Sheep, Camp, Little Sheep, Freezeout, Grouse, Crazyman, Mahogany, and Gumboot Creeks), the Grande Ronde River (Joseph Creek, Wenaha and Minam rivers), the Clearwater River (South Fork Clearwater River and Lolo Creek), and the Snake River (Lower Granite Dam adult trap). The Imnaha and Grande Ronde Rivers are in northeastern Oregon, the Clearwater is in Idaho, and the work in the Snake River would take place in Washington. The permit would be a renewal of work the NPT has been conducting for well over a decade in the Northwest.

The purpose of the research is to acquire information on the status (escapement abundance, genetic structure, life history traits) of juvenile and adult steelhead in the Imnaha, Grande Ronde, and Clearwater River basins. The research would benefit the listed species by providing information on current status that fishery managers can use to determine if recovery actions are helping increase wild Snake River salmonid populations. Baseline information on steelhead populations in the Imnaha, Grande Ronde, and Clearwater River basins would also be used to help guide future management actions. Adult and juvenile salmon and steelhead would be observed, handled, and marked. The researchers would use temporary/portable picket and resistance board weirs and rotary screw traps to capture the fish and would then sample them for biological information (fin tissue and scale samples). They may also mark some of the fish with opercule punches, fin clips, dyes, and PIT, floy, and/or Tyvek disk tags. Adult steelhead carcasses would also be collected and sampled. The researchers do not intend to kill any of the fish being captured, but a small number may die as an unintended result of the activities.

1341 – 5R

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (Tribes) are seeking to renew for five years their permit to take SR sockeye salmon and SR spr/sum Chinook salmon while conducting research designed to estimate their overwinter survival and downstream migration survival and timing. The researchers would also conduct limnological studies on the lakes and monitor sockeye rearing.

This research—which has been conducted every year since 1996—would continue to provide information on the relative success of the Pettit and Alturas Lakes (Idaho) sockeye salmon reintroduction programs and thereby benefit the listed fish by improving those programs. Juvenile SR sockeye salmon, spr/sum Chinook salmon, and steelhead would be collected at Pettit and Alturas Lakes, ID, using rotary screw traps and weirs. The fish would be sampled for biological information and released or tagged with passive integrated transponders and released. In addition, to determine trap efficiencies, a portion of the tagged juvenile SR sockeye salmon would be released upstream of the traps, captured at the traps a second time, and re-released. The Tribes do not intend to kill any of the fish being captured, but a small percentage may die as an unintended result of the research activities.

Permit 1386-9R

The Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) is seeking to renew for five years a research permit that currently allows them to take juvenile and adult LCR Chinook salmon, PS Chinook salmon, SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, SR fall-run Chinook salmon, UCR spring-run Chinook salmon, CR chum salmon, HC summer-run chum salmon, LCR coho salmon, OL sockeye salmon, LCR steelhead, MCR steelhead, PS steelhead, SR Basin steelhead, and UCR steelhead throughout the state of Washington. The purpose of the research is to investigate the occurrence and concentrations of toxic contaminants in non-anadromous freshwater fish tissue, sediment, and water at sites throughout Washington. The WDOE conducts this research in order to meet Federal and state regulatory requirements. This research would benefit listed species by identifying toxic contaminants in fish and informing pollution control actions. The WDOE proposes to capture fish using various methods including backpack and boat electrofishing, beach seining, block, fyke, and gill netting, and angling. All captured salmon and steelhead would either be released immediately or held temporarily in an aerated live well to help them recover before release. The researchers do not propose to kill any fish but a small number may die as an unintended result of research activities.

1465 – 4R

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) is seeking to renew for five years their permit to annually take juvenile threatened SR steelhead, threatened SR fall Chinook salmon, threatened SR spr/sum Chinook salmon, and endangered SR sockeye salmon during the course of two research projects designed to ascertain the condition of many Idaho streams. The purposes of the research are to (a) determine whether aquatic life is being properly supported in Idaho’s rivers, streams, and lakes, and (b) assess the overall condition of Idaho’s surface waters. The fish would benefit from the research because the data it produces would be used to inform decisions about how and where to protect and improve water quality in the state. The researchers would use backpack- and boat electrofishing equipment to capture the fish. They would then be weighed and measured (some may be anesthetized to limit stress) and released. The IDEQ does not intend to kill any of the fish being captured, but a small percentage may die as an unintended result of the research activities.

Permit 1598-4R

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is seeking to renew for five years a research permit that currently allows them to take juvenile PS Chinook salmon, UCR spring-run Chinook salmon, SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, SR fall-run Chinook salmon, LCR Chinook salmon, HCS chum salmon, CR chum salmon, LCR coho salmon, OL sockeye salmon, SR sockeye salmon, LCR steelhead, PS steelhead, MCR steelhead, SR steelhead, and UCR steelhead. The WSDOT research may also cause them to take eulachon, for which there are currently no ESA take prohibitions. Sample sites would be located throughout the state of Washington. The purpose of the WSDOT study is to determine the distribution and diversity of anadromous fish species in waterbodies crossed by or adjacent to the state transportation systems (highways, railroads, and/or airports). This information would be used to assess the impacts projects proposed at those facilities may have on listed species. The research would benefit the listed species by helping WSDOT minimize project impacts on listed fish to the greatest extent possible. Depending on the size of the stream system, the WSDOT proposes to capture fish using dip nets, stick seines, baited gee minnow traps, or backpack electrofishing. The captured fish would be identified to species and immediately released. The researchers do not propose to kill any listed fish being captured, but a small number may die as an unintended result of the activities.

Permit 16069-2R

The City of Portland (COP) is seeking to renew for five years a research permit that currently allows them to take juvenile and adult MCR steelhead, UCR spring Chinook salmon, UCR steelhead, SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, SR fall-run Chinook salmon, SR steelhead, SR sockeye salmon, LCR Chinook salmon, LCR coho salmon, LCR steelhead, CR chum salmon, UWR Chinook salmon, UWR steelhead, OC coho salmon, and S green sturgeon in the Columbia and Willamette rivers and tributaries (Oregon). The COP research may also cause them to take adult S eulachon, for which there are currently no ESA take prohibitions. This research is part of the Portland Watershed Management Plan, which aims to improve watershed health in the Portland area. In this program, project personnel sample 37 sites annually across all Portland watersheds for hydrology, habitat, water chemistry, and biological communities. The research would benefit listed salmonids by providing information to assess watershed health, status of critical habitat, effectiveness of watershed restoration actions, and compliance with regulatory requirements. The City of Portland proposes to capture juvenile fish using backpack and boat electrofishing, hold fish in a bucket of aerated water, take caudal fin clips for genetic analysis, and release fish at a point near their capture site that would be chosen to minimize the likelihood of recapture. The researchers would avoid contact with adult fish. The researchers do not propose to kill any fish but a small number may die as an unintended result of research activities.

Permit 16446 – 2R

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) are seeking to renew for five years their permit to take MCR steelhead during the course of research designed to monitor listed fish population status in the Walla Walla River watershed, Washington. The data gathered (on fish abundance, trends, genetics, diversity, productivity, and population structure) would be used to inform management decisions regarding land use activities and recovery planning in the Walla Walla subbasin. The researchers would use rotary screw traps and backpack electrofishing units to capture the fish. At the screw traps, the fish would then be identified, measured, weighed, tissue sampled, and implanted with PIT-Tags (if they do not already have tags). Fish captured via electrofishing would be handled, measured, allowed to recover, and released in a safe area. Some adult carcasses would also be sampled. The researchers do not expect to kill any of the fish being captured, but a small number may die as an unintended result of the research activities.

Permit 16521 – 2R

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)is seeking a to renew for five years their permit to annually capture, handle, and release juvenile UCR steelhead and Chinook salmon in the Hanford reach of the Columbia River and near the Tri-Cities, Washington. The purpose of the research is to gather data on fall Chinook abundance, length frequency distribution, and losses in the area. The information collected from these surveys has been used and continues to be used to evaluate protections for juvenile fall Chinook under the Hanford Reach Fall Chinook Protection Program Agreement and gauge the efficacy of the Coded Wire Tagging Program for marking of wild up-river bright fall Chinook in the Hanford Reach. These surveys can provide biologists and managers with definitive data on the presence or impacts on both non-listed and ESA Listed Chinook and steelhead residing in near shore habitats in this area of the Columbia River. These data, in turn, would be used to help guide management actions for the benefit of the listed species in the future. The researchers would use beach seines and backpack electrofishing equipment to capture the fish. The captured fish would be anesthetized, measured, allowed to recover, and released back to the river. The researchers do not expect to kill any listed fish, but a small number may die as an unintended result of the research activities.

Permit 16866-3R

The Oregon State University (OSU) Department of Fisheries and Wildlife is seeking to renew for five years a research permit that currently allows them to take adult and juvenile LCR Chinook salmon, LCR coho salmon, LCR steelhead, CR chum salmon, UWR Chinook salmon, UWR steelhead, MCR steelhead, UCR spring Chinook salmon, UCR steelhead, SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, SR fall-run Chinook salmon, and SR steelhead in the Willamette River basin (Oregon). The OSU research may also cause them to take adult S eulachon, for which there are currently no ESA take prohibitions. Objectives of the study are to (1) assess the status of native and non-native fish communities, (2) implement long-term monitoring, (3) compile and summarize existing reports and unpublished data on fish communities in the Willamette River from OSU research, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) research, and EPA research, and (4) measure water quality in known cold water refugia to determine their suitability as fish habitat. The study would benefit listed salmonids by providing data for state and Federal collaborators to use in their management and planning of conservation, restoration, and recovery efforts. The OSU researchers propose to capture juvenile salmonids using backpack and boat electrofishing, hold fish in aerated fresh water, and then identify, measure, and release juvenile fish. Adult fish may be encountered but would not be netted. The researchers do not propose to kill any fish but a small number may die as an unintended result of research activities.

Permit 18696 – 2M

The Idaho Power company is seeking to modify their five-year permit to annually capture juvenile white sturgeon in Lower Granite Reservoir. The researchers would use small-mesh gill nets and d-ring nets to capture the fish. The gill net fishing would take place at times (October and November) and in areas (the bottom of the reservoir) that have purposefully been chosen to have the least possible impact on listed fish. When the nets are pulled to the surface, listed species would immediately be released (including by cutting the net, if necessary) and allowed to return to the reservoir. The d-ring fishing would take place in June and July, but the same restrictions (immediately releasing listed fish, etc.) would still apply. The purpose of the research is to document sturgeon survival in early life stages in the mainstem Snake River. The research targets a species that is not listed, but the research should benefit listed salmonids by generating information about the habitat conditions in Lower Granite Reservoir and by helping managers develop conservation plans for the species that inhabit it. The researchers are not proposing to kill any of the fish they capture, but a small number of individuals may be killed as an inadvertent result of the activities.

Permit 20492

The ODFW is seeking to renew for five years a research permit for fisheries research in the Willamette and Columbia basins (Oregon) and on the Oregon coast. ODFW proposes to take juvenile UCR spring-run Chinook salmon, UCR steelhead, SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, SR fall-run Chinook salmon, SR Basin steelhead, SR sockeye salmon, MCR steelhead, LCR Chinook salmon, LCR coho salmon, LCR steelhead, CR chum salmon, UWR Chinook salmon, UWR steelhead, and OC coho salmon, and adult S green sturgeon. The ODFW research may also cause them to take adult S eulachon, for which there are currently no ESA take prohibitions. The new permit would cover the following projects: (1) Warmwater and Recreational Game Fish Management, (2) District Fish Population Sampling in the Upper Willamette Basin, and (3) Salmonid Assessment and Monitoring in the Deschutes River. The research would provide information on fish population structure, abundance, genetics, disease occurrences, and species interactions. This information would be used to direct management actions to benefit listed species. Juvenile salmonids would be collected using boat electrofishing. Some fish would be anesthetized, sampled for length and weight, allowed to recover from the anesthesia, and released. Most salmonids would be allowed to swim away after being electroshocked, or they would be netted and released immediately. The ODFW does not intend to kill any of the fish being captured, but a small number may die as an unintended result of the activities.

Common Elements among the Proposed Actions

Research permits lay out the conditions to be followed before, during, and after the research activities are conducted. These conditions are intended to (a) manage the interaction between scientists and listed salmonids by requiring that research activities be coordinated among permit holders, and between permit holders and NMFS, (b) minimize impacts on listed species, and (c) ensure that NMFS receives information about the effects the permitted activities have on the species concerned. All research permits we issue have the following conditions:

1. The permit holder must ensure that listed species are taken only at the levels, by the means, in the areas and for the purposes stated in the permit application, and according to the conditions in this permit.

2. The permit holder must not intentionally kill or cause to be killed any listed species unless the permit specifically allows intentional lethal take.

3. The permit holder must handle listed fish with extreme care and keep them in cold water to the maximum extent possible during sampling and processing procedures.

When fish are transferred or held, a healthy environment must be provided; e.g., the holding units must contain adequate amounts of well-circulated water. When using gear that captures a mix of species, the permit holder must process listed fish first to minimize handling stress.

4. Each researcher must stop capturing and handling listed fish if the water temperature exceeds 70 degrees Fahrenheit at the capture site. Under these conditions, listed fish may only be identified and counted. Additionally, electrofishing is not permitted if water temperatures exceed 64 degrees Fahrenheit.

5. If the permit holder anesthetizes listed fish to avoid injuring or killing them during handling, the fish must be allowed to recover before being released. Fish that are only counted must remain in water and not be anesthetized.

6. The permit holder must use a sterilized needle for each individual injection when passive integrated transponder tags (PIT-tags) are inserted into listed fish.

7. If the permit holder unintentionally captures any listed adult fish while sampling for juveniles, the adult fish must be released without further handling and such take must be reported.

8. The permit holder must exercise care during spawning ground surveys to avoid disturbing listed adult salmonids when they are spawning. Researchers must avoid walking in salmon streams whenever possible, especially where listed salmonids are likely to spawn. Visual observation must be used instead of intrusive sampling methods, especially when just determining fish presence.

9. The permit holder using backpack electrofishing equipment must comply with NMFS' Backpack Electrofishing Guidelines (June 2000) available at http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/publications/reference_documents/esa_refs/section4d/electro2000.pdf.

10. The permit holder must obtain approval from NMFS before changing sampling locations or research protocols.

11. The permit holder must notify NMFS as soon as possible but no later than two days after any authorized level of take is exceeded or if such an event is likely. The permit holder must submit a written report detailing why the authorized take level was exceeded or is likely to be exceeded.

12. The permit holder is responsible for any biological samples collected from listed species as long as they are used for research purposes. The permit holder may not

transfer biological samples to anyone not listed in the application without prior written approval from NMFS.

13. The person(s) actually doing the research must carry a copy of this permit while conducting the authorized activities.

14. The permit holder must allow any NMFS employee or representative to accompany field personnel while they conduct the research activities.

15. The permit holder must allow any NMFS employee or representative to inspect any records or facilities related to the permit activities.

16. The permit holder may not transfer or assign this permit to any other person as defined in Section 3(12) of the ESA. This permit ceases to be in effect if transferred or assigned to any other person without NMFS' authorization.

17. NMFS may amend the provisions of this permit after giving the permit holder reasonable notice of the amendment.

18. The permit holder must obtain all other Federal, state, and local permits/authorizations needed for the research activities.

19. On or before January 31st of every year, the permit holder must submit to NMFS a post-season report in the prescribed form describing the research activities, the number of listed fish taken and the location, the type of take, the number of fish intentionally killed and unintentionally killed, the take dates, and a brief summary of the research results. The report must be submitted electronically on our permit website, and the forms can be found at https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov/. Falsifying annual reports or permit records is a violation of this permit.

20. If the permit holder violates any permit condition they will be subject to any and all penalties provided by the ESA. NMFS may revoke this permit if the authorized activities are not conducted in compliance with the permit and the requirements of the ESA or if NMFS determines that its ESA section 10(d) findings are no longer valid.

"Permit holder" means the permit holder or any employee, contractor, or agent of the permit holder. Also, NMFS may include conditions specific to the proposed research in certain permits.

Finally, NMFS will use the annual reports to monitor the actual number of listed fish taken annually in the scientific research activities and will adjust annual permitted take levels if they are deemed to be excessive or if cumulative take levels rise to the point where they are detrimental to the listed species.

2.0 ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT BIOLOGICAL OPINION

The ESA establishes a national program for conserving threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, plants, and the habitat upon which they depend. As required by section 7(a)(2) of the ESA, Federal agencies must ensure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of endangered or threatened species, or adversely modify or destroy their designated critical habitat. Per the requirements of the ESA, Federal action agencies consult with NMFS and section 7(b)(3) requires that, at the conclusion of consultation, NMFS provides an opinion stating how the agency's actions would affect listed species and their critical habitat. If incidental take is expected, section 7(b)(4) requires NMFS to provide an incidental take statement (ITS) that specifies the impact of any incidental taking and includes non-discretionary reasonable and prudent measures and terms and conditions to minimize such impacts.

2.1 Analytical Approach

This biological opinion includes both a jeopardy analysis and an adverse modification analysis. The jeopardy analysis relies upon the regulatory definition of "to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species," which is "to engage in an action that would be expected, directly or indirectly, to reduce appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of that species" (50 CFR 402.02). Therefore, the jeopardy analysis considers both survival and recovery of the species.

This biological opinion relies on the definition of "destruction or adverse modification," which "means a direct or indirect alteration that appreciably diminishes the value of critical habitat for the conservation of a listed species. Such alterations may include, but are not limited to, those that alter the physical or biological features essential to the conservation of a species or that preclude or significantly delay development of such features" (81 FR 7214). The adverse modification analysis considers the impacts of the Federal action on the conservation value of designated critical habitat.

The critical habitat designations for the species considered here used the term primary constituent element (PCE) or essential features. The new critical habitat regulations (81 FR 7414) replace this term with physical or biological features (PBFs). The shift in terminology does not change the approach used in conducting a ''destruction or adverse modification'' analysis, which is the same regardless of whether the original designation identified PCEs, PBFs, or essential features. In this biological opinion, we use the term PBF to mean PCE or essential feature, as appropriate for the specific critical habitat.

Section 4(d) protective regulations prohibit taking naturally spawned fish and listed hatchery fish with an intact adipose fin but do not prohibit taking listed hatchery fish that have had their adipose fins removed (70 FR 37160, 71 FR 834, 73 FR 7816). As a result, researchers do not require a permit to take hatchery fish that have had their adipose fin removed. Nevertheless, this document evaluates impacts on both natural and hatchery fish to determine the effects of the action on each species as a whole.

We use the following approach to determine whether a proposed action is likely to jeopardize listed species or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat:

- Identify the rangewide status of the species and critical habitat likely to be adversely affected by the proposed action.
- Describe the environmental baseline in the action area.
- Analyze the effects of the proposed action on both species and their habitat using an "exposure-response-risk" approach. For research actions, exposure equates to capturing and handling the animals (including tagging, etc.); response is the degree to which they're affected by the actions (e.g., injured or killed); and risk relates to what those responses mean at the individual, population, and species levels.
- Describe any cumulative effects in the action area.
- Integrate and synthesize the above factors to assess the risk that the proposed action poses to species and critical habitat.
- Reach jeopardy and adverse modification conclusions.
- If necessary, define a reasonable and prudent alternative to the proposed action.

2.2 Rangewide Status of the Species and Critical Habitat

This opinion examines the status of each species that would be adversely affected by the proposed action. The status is determined by the level of extinction risk that the listed species face, based on parameters considered in documents such as recovery plans, status reviews, and listing decisions. This informs the description of the species' likelihood of both survival and recovery. The species status section also helps to inform the description of the species' current "reproduction, numbers, or distribution" as described in 50 CFR 402.02. The opinion also examines the condition of critical habitat throughout the designated area, evaluates the conservation value of the various watersheds and coastal and marine environments that make up the designated area, and discusses the current function of the essential physical and biological features that help to form that conservation value.

The ESA defines species to include "any subspecies of fish or wildlife or plants, and any distinct population segment of any species of vertebrate fish or wildlife which interbreeds when mature." NMFS adopted a policy for identifying salmon distinct population segments (DPS) in 1991 (56 FR 58612). It states that a population or group of populations is considered an "evolutionarily significant unit" (ESU) if it is "substantially reproductively isolated from conspecific populations," and if it represents "an important component of the evolutionary legacy of the species." The policy equates an ESU with a DPS. In 1996 NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service adopted a joint DPS policy, and in 2005 NMFS began applying that policy to *O. mykiss* (steelhead). Hence, UCR Chinook salmon, SR fall Chinook salmon, and SR spr/sum Chinook salmon constitute ESUs of the species *O. tshawytscha*; UCR steelhead, MCR steelhead, and SR steelhead constitute DPSs of the species *O. mykiss*; and SR sockeye salmon constitute an ESU of the species *O. nerka*. These ESUs and DPSs include natural-origin populations and hatchery populations, as described in the species status sections below.

2.2.1 Climate Change

One factor affecting the status of the species considered here, and aquatic habitat at large, is climate change.

As reviewed in Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB) (2007), the current status of salmon and steelhead species and their critical habitat in the Pacific Northwest has been influenced by climate change over the past 50-100 years and this change is expected to continue into the future. Average annual Northwest air temperatures have increased by approximately 1°C since 1900, which is nearly twice that for the last 100 years, indicating an increasing rate of change. The latest climate models project a warming of 0.1 to 0.6°C per decade over the next century. This change in surface temperature has already modified, and is likely to continue to modify, freshwater, estuarine, and marine habitats of salmon and steelhead, including designated critical habitat. Consequently, abundance, productivity, spatial distribution, and diversity of salmonid life stages occupying each type of affected habitat is likely to be further modified, generally in a detrimental manner. There is still a great deal of uncertainty associated with predicting specific changes in timing, location and magnitude of future climate change. It is also likely that the intensity of climate change effects on salmon and steelhead will vary by geographic area.

Precipitation trends during the next century are less certain than for temperature but more precipitation is likely to occur during October through March and less during summer months, and more of the winter precipitation is likely to fall as rain rather than snow (ISAB 2007; USGCRP 2009). Where snow occurs, a warmer climate will cause earlier runoff so stream flows in late spring, summer, and fall will be lower and water temperatures will be warmer (ISAB 2007; USGCRP 2009).

Higher winter stream flows increase the risk that winter floods in sensitive watersheds will damage spawning redds and wash away incubating eggs. Earlier peak stream flows will also flush some young salmon and steelhead from rivers to estuaries before they are physically mature, increasing stress and the risk of predation. Lower stream flows and warmer water temperatures during summer will degrade summer rearing conditions, in part by increasing the prevalence and virulence of fish diseases and parasites (USGCRP 2009). Other adverse effects are likely to include altered migration patterns, accelerated embryo development, premature emergence of fry, variation in quality and quantity of tributary rearing habitat, and increased competition and predation risk from warm-water, non-native species (ISAB 2007).

The earth's oceans are also warming, with considerable interannual and inter-decadal variability superimposed on the longer-term trend (Bindoff *et al.* 2007). Historically, warm periods in the coastal Pacific Ocean have coincided with relatively low abundances of salmon and steelhead, while cooler ocean periods have coincided with relatively high abundances (Scheuerell and Williams 2006; Zabel *et al.* 2006; USGCRP 2009). Ocean conditions adverse to salmon and steelhead may be more likely under a warming climate (Zabel *et al.* 2006). Moreover, as atmospheric carbon emissions increase, increasing levels of carbon are absorbed by the oceans, changing the pH of the water. Marine fish species have exhibited negative responses to ocean acidification conditions that include changes in growth, survivorship, and behavior. Marine phytoplankton, which are the base of the food web for many oceanic species, have shown varied responses to ocean acidification that include changes in growth rate and calcification (Feely *et al.* 2012).

2.2.2 Status of the Species

For Pacific salmon and steelhead, NMFS commonly uses four parameters to assess the viability of the populations that, together, constitute the species: spatial structure, diversity, abundance, and productivity (McElhany et al. 2000). These "viable salmonid population" (VSP) criteria therefore encompass the species' "reproduction, numbers, or distribution" as described in 50 CFR 402.02. When a population or species has sufficient spatial structure, diversity, abundance, and productivity, it will generally be able to maintain its capacity to adapt to various environmental conditions and sustain itself in the natural environment. These attributes are influenced by survival, behavior, and experiences throughout a species' entire life cycle, and these characteristics, in turn, are influenced by habitat and other environmental conditions.

"Spatial structure" refers both to the spatial distributions of individuals in the population and the processes that generate that distribution. A population's spatial structure depends fundamentally on habitat quality and spatial configuration and the dynamics and dispersal characteristics of individuals in the population.

"Diversity" refers to the distribution of traits within and among populations. These range in scale from DNA sequence variation at single genes to complex life history traits (McElhany et al. 2000).

"Abundance" generally refers to the number of naturally-produced adults (i.e., the progeny of naturally-spawning parents) in the natural environment (e.g., on spawning grounds).

"Productivity," as applied to viability factors, refers to the entire life cycle; i.e., the number of naturally-spawning adults produced per parent. When progeny replace or exceed the number of parents, a population is stable or increasing. When progeny fail to replace the number of parents, the population is declining. McElhany et al. (2000) use the terms "population growth rate" and "productivity" interchangeably when referring to production over the entire life cycle. They also refer to "trend in abundance," which is the manifestation of long-term population growth rate.

For species with multiple populations, once the biological status of a species' populations has been determined, NMFS assesses the status of the entire species using criteria for groups of populations, as described in recovery plans and guidance documents from technical recovery teams. Considerations for species viability include having multiple populations that are viable, ensuring that populations with unique life histories and phenotypes are viable, and that some viable populations are both widespread to avoid concurrent extinctions from mass catastrophes and spatially close to allow functioning as metapopulations (McElhany et al. 2000).

A species' status thus is a function of how well its biological requirements are being met: the greater the degree to which the requirements are fulfilled, the better the species' status. Information on the status and distribution of all the species considered here can be found in a number of documents: the status review prepared by the NWFSC (Waples et al. 1991); the Status Review of West Coast Steelhead from Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and California (Busby et al.1996); the Status Review Update for West Coast Steelhead from Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and California (NMFS 1997); the Preliminary Conclusions Regarding the Updated Status of Listed ESUs of West Coast Salmon and Steelhead (NMFS 2003); the Updated Status of Federally Listed ESUs of West Coast Salmon and Steelhead (Good et al. 2005); and most importantly for this opinion, the Status Review Update for Pacific Salmon and Steelhead Listed Under the Endangered Species Act: Northwest and 2015 (Ford 2011 and NWFSC 2015, respectively). These documents (and other relevant information) may be found at www.nwr.NOAA.gov; the discussions they contain are summarized below. For the purposes of our later analysis, all the species considered here require functioning habitat and adequate spatial structure, abundance, productivity, and diversity to ensure their survival and recovery in the wild.

Upper Columbia River Chinook

On March 24, 1999, NMFS first listed UCR spring-run Chinook salmon as an endangered species under the ESA (NOAA 1999). In that listing determination, NMFS concluded that the UCR spring-run Chinook salmon were in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range. When NMFS re-examined the status of the UCR Chinook in 2005 (70 FR 37160), we came once again to the conclusion that the species warranted listing as endangered. On August 15, 2011, NMFS announced the results of an ESA 5-year review UCR Chinook (76 FR 50448). After reviewing new information on the viability of this species, ESA section 4 listing factors, and efforts being made to protect the species, NMFS concluded that this species should retain its endangered listing classification. A recovery plan is available for this species (Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board 2007).

Spatial Structure and Diversity

The UCR spring-run Chinook salmon inhabit tributaries upstream from the Yakima River to Chief Joseph Dam. Adult UCR Chinook return to the Wenatchee River from late March through early May, and to the Entiat and Methow Rivers from late March through June. These three areas comprise the species' three populations—there was one other considered, the Okanogan, but it was determined to have been extirpated. Most adults return after spending two years in the ocean, although 20 percent to 40 percent return after three years at sea. Peak spawning for all three populations occurs from August to September. Smolts typically spend one year in freshwater before migrating downstream. There are slight genetic differences between this species and others containing stream-type fish, but more importantly, the ESU boundary was defined using ecological differences in spawning and rearing habitat (Myers et al. 1998). The Grand Coulee Fish Management Program (1939 through 1943) may have had a major influence on this species' diversity because fish from multiple populations were mixed into one relatively homogenous group and redistributed into streams throughout the upper Columbia River region. Currently, approximately 65% of the fish retuning to this ESU are hatchery fish. The NMFS originally determined that six hatchery stocks in the UCR basin (Chiwawa, Methow, Twisp, Chewuch, and White Rivers and Nason Creek) should be included as part of the species because they were considered essential for recovering the fish. The artificially propagated stocks changed slightly in the subsequent review, in that the Winthrop composite stocks were listed and the Nason Creek stock was not. The ICTRT identified no MPGs due to the relatively small geographic area affected (IC-TRT 2003; McClure et al. 2005; Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015) (Table 2).

Table 2. Scores for the key elements (A&P, diversity, and SS/D) used to determine current overall viability risk for spring-run UCR Chinook salmon (NWFSC 2015). Risk ratings included very low (VL), low (L), moderate (M), high (H), very high (VH), and extirpated (E).

Population	A&P	Diversity	Integrated SS/D	Overall Viability Risk
Wenatchee River	H	H	H	H
Entiat River	H	H	H	H
Methow River	H	H	H	H
Okanogan River				E

The composite SS/D risks are "high" for all three of the extant populations in this MPG. The spatial processes component of the SS/D risk is "low" for the Wenatchee River and Methow River populations and "moderate" for the Entiat River (loss of production in lower section increases effective distance to other populations). All three of the extant populations in this MPG are at "high" risk for diversity, driven primarily by chronically high proportions of hatchery-origin spawners in natural spawning areas and lack of genetic diversity among the natural-origin spawners (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015).

Increases in natural origin abundance relative to the extremely low spawning levels observed in the mid-1990s are encouraging; however, average productivity levels remain extremely low. Overall, the viability of Upper Columbia Spring Chinook salmon ESU has likely improved somewhat since the last status review, but the ESU is still clearly at "moderate-to-high" risk of extinction (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015).

Abundance

There are no estimates of historical abundance specific to this species prior to the 1930s. The drainages supporting this species are all above Rock Island Dam on the upper Columbia River. Rock Island Dam is the oldest major hydroelectric project on the Columbia River; it began operations in 1933. Counts of returning Chinook have been made since the 1930s. Annual estimates of the aggregate return of spring Chinook to the upper Columbia are derived from the dam counts based on the nadir between spring and summer return peaks. Spring Chinook salmon currently spawn in three major drainages above Rock Island Dam—the Wenatchee, Methow and Entiat Rivers. Historically, spring Chinook may have also used portions of the Okanogan River.

The 1998 Chinook Status Review (Myers et al. 1998) reported that long-term trends in abundance for upper Columbia spring Chinook populations were generally negative, ranging from -5% to +1%. Analyses of the data series, updated to include 1996-2001 returns, indicate that those trends have continued. The long-term trend in spawning escapement is downward for all three systems. The Wenatchee River spawning escapements have declined an average of 5.6% per year, the Entiat River population at an average of 4.8%, and the Methow River population an average rate of 6.3% per year since 1958 (NMFS 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s, spawning escapement estimates were relatively high with substantial year-to-year variability. Escapements declined in the early 1980s, then peaked at relatively high levels in the mid-1980s. Returns declined sharply in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The 1900-1994 returns were at the lowest levels observed in the 40-plus years of the data sets, and from 1995 through 1999, the returns averaged 282 fish (PCSRF 2007).

The Upper Columbia Biological Requirements Workgroup (Ford et al. 2001) recommended interim delisting levels of 3,750, 500, and 2,200 spawners for the populations returning to the Wenatchee, Entiat, and Methow drainages, respectively. Five-year geometric mean spawning escapements from 1997 to 2001 were at 8%-15% of these levels. Target levels have not been exceeded since 1985 for the Methow run and the early 1970s for the Wenatchee and Entiat populations (NMFS 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s, spawning escapement estimates were relatively high, with substantial year-to-year variability. Escapements declined in the early 1980s, then peaked at relatively high levels in the mid-1980s. Returns declined sharply in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Returns from 1990 to 1994 were at the lowest levels observed in the 40-plus years of the data sets. The Upper Columbia Biological Requirements Workgroup (Ford et al. 2001) recommended interim delisting levels of 3,750, 500, and 2,200 spawners for the populations returning to the Wenatchee, Entiat, and Methow river drainages, respectively. The 5-year geometric mean spawning escapements for 1997 to 2001) were at 8–15% of these levels. Target levels have not been exceeded since 1985 for the Methow River run, and since the early 1970s for the Wenatchee and Entiat river populations. From the year 2006 through 2010, the five-year average return to the ESU—as measured primarily by spawning surveys--was 3,900 (Salmonid Population Summary (SPS) query, April 2014[2]); of these, approximately 65% were of hatchery origin. Counts at Rock Island Dam in 2008, 2010, and 2011 showed an average estimated 1,668 natural fish retuning to the ESU which, given a 35% natural origin for the overall return, indicated that the total return was on the order of 4,766 fish. (The counts did not differentiate between adipose-clipped fish hatchery and hatchery fish with an intact adipose, and there is a data gap for the year 2009). The figures just quoted demonstrate that there is some degree of variability in the various sources for returning adult numbers. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to take all the various factors into account (survey types, data gaps, various dam counts,

[2] The data contained in the SPS database are primarily summary data, compiled at the population level. The database also includes a limited number of series representing the aggregate returns to groups of populations (e.g., Lower Granite Dam counts) or counts of spawners within a subsection of a population where expansions to the population level were not feasible.

hatchery vs. wild components, etc.) and clearly and accurately determine what the returns actually are. Nonetheless, the figures we believe to be the most likely to represent the actual returns come from the U.S. v. Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) numbers derived from dam counts and complied by the WDFW (WDFW 2013). These numbers are widely used throughout the region for management purposes (particularly in setting harvest quotas), and at this point represent the very best available scientific and technical knowledge to which we have access. The most recent year for which these numbers have been calculated and published is 2014 from NMFS's Adaptive Management Implementation Plan (AMIP 2014). That year, the UCR Chinook total return to Rock Island Dam was 3,986 natural adults. The most recent four-year average to that date was 3,170 fish. Given that these fish comprise approximately 35% of the total run, it signifies that the total return for 2014 was 11,388 fish and the most recent four year average was 9,057 adults.

Juvenile abundance estimates are published each spring in an annual memorandum estimating percentage of listed Pacific salmon and steelhead smolts arriving at various locations in the Columbia River basin. The averages of the five most recent projections for the UCR Chinook juvenile outmigration are displayed below.

Table 3. Recent Five-Year Average Projected Outmigrations for UCR Chinook (Dey 2012; Zabel 2013; Zabel 2014, Zabel 2015, Zabel 2016).

Origin	Outmigration
Natural	521,802
Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped*	507,920
Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose*	592,379

*When the above species was listed, NMFS included certain artificially propagated (hatchery-origin) populations in the listing. Some of those listed fish have had their adipose fins clipped at their respective hatcheries and some have not.

Productivity

All three existing Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon populations have exhibited similar trends and patterns in abundance over the past 40 years. The 1998 Chinook salmon status review (Myers et al. 1998) reported that long-term trends in abundance for upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon populations were generally negative, ranging from –5% to +1%. Analyses of the data series, updated to include 1996–2001 returns, indicate that those trends have continued. The long-term trend in spawning escapement is downward for all three systems. Between 1958 and 2001, Wenatchee River spawning escapements declined at an average rate of 5.6% per year, the Entiat River population at an average of 4.8% per year, and the Methow River population at an average of 6.3% per year Good et al. 2005). These rates of decline were calculated from the redd count data series. Out of the 12 sub-populations identified in the ESU, only two showed short-term increases in productivity between 1997 and 2001—though all other sub-populations were decreasing at slower rates than in the previous five years.

McClure et al. (2003) reported standardized quantitative risk assessment results for 152 listed salmon stocks in the Columbia River basin, including representative data sets (1980–2000 return years) for upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon. Average annual growth rate (λ) for the upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon population was estimated at 0.85, the lowest average reported for any of the Columbia River ESUs analyzed in the study. Assuming that population growth rates were to continue at the 1980–2000 levels, upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon populations are projected to have a very high probability of a 90% decline within 50 years (0.87 for the Methow River population, 1.0 for the Wenatchee and Entiat runs). In more recent year (1995 – 2008) production seems to have increased and, depending upon hatchery effectiveness, has varied between .92 and 1.13 (Ford 2011).

Limiting Factors

As noted above, UCR spring-run Chinook salmon inhabit tributaries upstream from the Yakima River to Chief Joseph Dam and the Columbia River mainstem upstream from the Yakima River. Though UCR Chinook are rarely intercepted in ocean fisheries, they face other difficulties (Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board 2007; NOAA Fisheries 2011):

- Effects related to hydropower system in the mainstem Columbia River, including reduced upstream and downstream fish passage, altered ecosystem structure and function, altered flows, and degraded water quality
- Degradation of floodplain connectivity and function, channel structure and complexity, riparian areas and large woody debris recruitment, stream flow, and water quality
- Degraded estuarine and nearshore marine habitat
- Hatchery-related effects

- Persistence of non-native (exotic) fish species continues to affect habitat conditions for listed species
- Harvest in Columbia River fisheries

Habitat in the area has been degraded by a number of factors, primarily high temperatures, excess sediment, outright habitat loss, degraded channels, impaired floodplains, and reduced stream flow. All of these factors (and others) have negatively affected the ESU's PCEs (see "Approach to the Analysis" above) to the extent that it was necessary to list them under the ESA. Additionally, and as noted above, both passage barriers and hatchery effects have had negative impacts on this species. (Although steps are being taken to improve both those factors through recovery planning.)

Status Summary

Several factors—both population- and habitat-related have caused this ESU to decline to the point that it is likely to become extinct in the foreseeable future. Ford (2011) found all three populations to still be at high risk with regard to their viability. While there has been some improvement in some areas, particularly since the historic lows of the 1990s, the general outlook in terms of all four criteria is that the ESU is still at high risk of becoming extinct and the species is not currently viable (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015).

Upper Columbia River Steelhead

On August 18, 1997, NMFS first listed UCR steelhead as an endangered species under the ESA (62 FR 43937). In that determination, NMFS concluded that the UCR steelhead were in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range. When NMFS re-examined the status of the UCR steelhead, explicitly taking into account the effect of abundant hatchery steelhead on the immediacy of the risk, we determined that the DPS was likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future (threatened), rather than presently endangered (71 FR 834). That listing was set aside on June 13, 2007 (Trout Unlimited et al. v. Lohn; Case Number CV06-0483-JCC), and the status of the species reverted to endangered as a result of the court's order. The district court's order is on appeal to the Ninth Circuit. The most recent listing included fish from five hatchery programs (Table 4). Under the final listing in 2006, the section 4(d) protections, and limits on them, apply to natural and hatchery threatened salmon with an intact adipose fin, but not to listed hatchery fish that have had their adipose fin removed. This document evaluates impacts on both listed natural and listed hatchery fish. A recovery plan is available for this species (Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board 2007).

Table 4. List of Hatchery Stocks Included in the UCR Steelhead DPS.

Artificial Propagation Program	Run	Location (State)
Wenatchee River Steelhead *	Summer	Wenatchee River (Washington)
Wells Hatchery Steelhead *	Summer	Methow River (Washington)
	Summer	Okanogan River (Washington)
Winthrop NFH Steelhead (Wells Steelhead)	Summer	Methow River (Washington)
Omak Creek Steelhead	Summer	Okanogan River (Washington)
Ringold Hatchery (Wells Steelhead)	Summer	Middle Columbia River (Washington)

* Denotes programs that were listed as part of the 1999 listing of the DPS

Structure and Diversity

The UCR steelhead inhabit the Columbia River and its tributaries upstream of the Yakima River. This region includes several rivers that drain the east slopes of the Cascade Mountains and several that originate in Canada (only U.S. populations are included in the listed species). Dry habitat conditions in this area are less conducive to steelhead survival than those in many other parts of the Columbia River basin (Mullen et al. 1992a). Although the life history of these fish is similar to that of other inland steelhead, smolt ages are some of the oldest on the West Coast (up to seven years old), probably due to the ubiquitous cold water temperatures (Mullen et al. 1992b). Adults spawn later than in most downstream populations—remaining in fresh water up to a year before spawning. Most current natural production occurs in the Wenatchee and Methow River systems, with a smaller run returning to the Entiat River (WDF et al. 1993). Very limited spawning also occurs in the Okanagan River basin. Most of the fish spawning in natural production areas are of hatchery origin. NMFS originally determined that one hatchery stock in the upper Columbia River basin, the Wells Hatchery stock, should be considered part of the species because it was essential for the recovery of the species at the time. The final listing in 2006, the section 4(d) protections, and limits on them, apply to natural and hatchery threatened salmon with an intact adipose fin, but not to listed hatchery fish that have had their adipose fin removed.

Life histories are relatively uniform throughout all populations in the UCR steelhead DPS. In 2000, NMFS developed an initial set of population definitions for this DPS, along with basic criteria for evaluating the status of each population using guidelines described in McElhany et al. (2000). The definitions and criteria are described in Ford et al. (2001) and have been used in the development and review of Mid-Columbia PUD plans and the FCRPS Biological Opinion. The interim population definitions and criteria have been submitted as recommendations to the

Interior Columbia Basin Technical Recovery Team. Briefly, the joint technical team recommended that the Wenatchee, Entiat, and Methow Rivers be considered separate populations within the UCR steelhead DPS. The Okanogan River may have supported a fourth population, but the committee deferred a making a recommendation regarding the putative Okanogan population to the Technical Recovery Team. The four populations are divided into two stock groupings: Wenatchee/Entiat and Methow/Okanogan. Ford et al. (2001) developed and described abundance, productivity, and spatial structure criteria for each population in the DPS. Due largely to the small geographic area involve, the ICTRT did not identify any MPGs for this species.

Hatchery returns dominate the estimated escapement in the Wenatchee, Methow, and Okanogan river drainages. The effectiveness of hatchery spawners relative to their natural counterparts is a major uncertainty for all populations. Although the return timing into the Columbia River is similar for both wild and hatchery steelhead returning to the upper Columbia, the spawning timing in the hatchery is accelerated. The long-term effects of such acceleration on the spawning timing of returning hatchery-produced adults in nature are not known. We have no direct information on relative fitness of UCR steelhead progeny with at least one parent of hatchery origin.

Hatchery production averaged approximately 300,000 smolts/year in the 1960s, 425,000 in the 1970s, 790,000 in the 1980s, and more than 800,000 in the 1990s (including releases exceeding one million fish). Current mitigation and supplementation targets are to use locally obtained returning adults for programs. The objective for the Wenatchee is to release 400,000 smolts per year using broodstock collected from run-of-the-river fish in the Wenatchee (the main collection point is Dryden Dam). Broodstock collected at Wells Dam are used for outplanting in the Methow (380,000 target release) and the Okanogan (100,000 target release). The Entiat Basin has been designated as a natural production “reference” drainage and thus has no hatchery outplanting.

Table 5. Summary of the key elements (A&P, diversity, and SS/D) and scores used to determine current overall viability risk for UCR steelhead populations (NWFSC 2015). Risk ratings included very low (VL), low (L), moderate (M), high (H), and very high (VH).

Population (Watershed)	A&P	Diversity	Integrated SS/D	Overall Viability Risk
Wenatchee River	H	H	H	H
Entiat River	H	H	H	H
Methow River	H	H	H	H
Okanogan River	H	H	H	H

Abundance

Estimates of historical (pre-1960s) abundance specific to the UCR steelhead are available from fish counts at dams. Counts at Rock Island Dam from 1933 to 1959 averaged 2,600 to 3,700, suggesting a pre-fishery run size in excess of 5,000 adults for tributaries above Rock Island Dam (Chapman et al. 1994). Runs may have already been depressed by lower Columbia River fisheries at this time. Steelhead in the upper Columbia River continue to exhibit low abundances, both in absolute numbers and in relation to numbers of hatchery fish throughout the region.

A review of data from the past several years indicates that natural steelhead abundance has declined or remained low in the major river basins occupied by this species since the early 1990s. However, returns of both hatchery and naturally produced steelhead to the upper Columbia have increased somewhat in recent years. Priest Rapids Dam is below the UCR steelhead production areas. The 1997-2001 returns—counted at the Priest Rapids fish ladder—averaged approximately 12,900 steelhead. The average for the five years from 1992 through 1996 was 7,800 fish. In 2004 and 2005, it is estimated that totals of 18,727 and 12,143 UCR steelhead (respectively) returned to their spawning grounds (FPC 2005 and PCSRF 2007). However, returns to the upper Columbia are composed primarily of hatchery-origin fish. The percentage of the run over Priest Rapids of natural origin fish increased to over 25% in the 1980s, then dropped to less than 10% by the mid-1990s. The median percent wild for 1997-2001 was 17% (NMFS 2003; Good et al. 2005). Recent data show that these trends have continued. From the year 2004 through the year 2009, the five-year average return to the DPS—as determined primarily by spawning ground surveys--was 7,757 adult fish (Ford 2011); of these, approximately 80% to 90% were of hatchery origin (PCSRF 2007; Ford 2011). Updated spawning ground surveys show a five-year average return of 7,830 adults, of which 23% were natural fish (NWFSC 2015). The figures just quoted demonstrate that there is some degree of variability in the various sources for returning adult numbers. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to take all the various factors into account (survey types, data gaps, various dam counts, hatchery vs. wild components, etc.) and clearly and accurately determine what the returns actually are. Nonetheless, the figures we believe to be the most likely to represent the actual returns come from the WDFW steelhead run-cycle stock assessment reports at Priest Rapids Dam. These numbers represent the very best available scientific and technical knowledge to which we have access. The most recent year for which these numbers have been calculated and published is 2014 (AMIP). That year, the UCR steelhead total return to Priest Rapids Dam was 3,788 natural adults. The most recent four-year average to that date was 4,410 fish. Given that these fish comprise approximately 23% of the total run, it signifies that the total return for 2013 was 16,469 fish and the most recent four year average was 19,179 adults.

Juvenile abundance estimates are published each spring in an annual memorandum estimating percentage of listed Pacific salmon and steelhead smolts arriving at various locations in the Columbia River basin. The averages of the five most recent projections for the UCR Steelhead juvenile outmigration are displayed below.

Table 6. Recent Five-Year Average Projected Outmigrations for UCR Steelhead (Dey 2012; Zabel 2013; Zabel 2014; Zabel 2015, Zabel 2016).

Origin	Outmigration
Natural	245,890
Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped*	631,207
Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose*	143,502

*When the above species was listed, NMFS included certain artificially propagated (hatchery-origin) populations in the listing. Some of those listed fish have had their adipose fins clipped at their respective hatcheries and some have not.

The natural abundance number should be viewed with caution, however, as it only addresses one of several juvenile life stages. Moreover, deriving any juvenile abundance estimate is complicated by a host of variables, including the facts that: (1) spawner counts and associated sex ratios and fecundity estimates can vary widely between years; (2) multiple juvenile age classes (fry, parr, smolt) are present yet comparable data sets may not exist for all of them; (3) it is very difficult to distinguish between non-listed juvenile rainbow trout and listed juvenile steelhead; and (4) survival rates between life stages are poorly understood and subject to a multitude of natural and human-induced variables (e.g., predation, floods, fishing, etc.).

Productivity

Estimates of natural production in this steelhead DPS are well below replacement—indicating that natural steelhead populations in the upper Columbia River basin are not self-sustaining at the present time. The Biological Review Team discussed anecdotal evidence that resident rainbow trout—present in numerous streams throughout the region—contribute to anadromous run abundance. This would reduce estimates of the natural steelhead replacement ratio.

Natural returns have generally increased since 1991 for both stock groupings (Wenatchee/Entiat and Methow/Okanogan). Population growth rates (expressed as λ, calculated using the running sum method) are substantially influenced by assumptions regarding the relative effectiveness of hatchery spawners. The same key factor must be considered in analyzing return-per-spawner data sets. The relative contribution of returning steelhead of hatchery origin to natural spawning is not clearly understood. There may be timing and spatial differences in the distribution of hatchery- and natural-origin spawners that affect production of juveniles. Eggs and juveniles from natural spawning involving hatchery-origin fish may survive at a different rate than those from natural-origin adults.

Both short-term (1990–2001) and long-term (1976–2001) estimates of λ are positive if it is assumed that hatchery fish have not contributed to natural production in recent years. Assuming that hatchery fish contributed to natural production at the same level as wild fish, λ estimates are substantially lower. Under this scenario, natural production is consistently and substantially below the total number (hatchery plus natural origin) of spawners in any given year. This is consistent with McClure et al. (2003) and the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion (NMFS 2000a), in which λ was estimated from the DPS-level time series for the time period 1980–2000. Although all the spawners when taken together have an apparent population growth rate of 1.00 (with relatively high variability), this growth rate is lowered to 0.69 if hatchery fish contributed to subsequent generations at the same rate as wild fish.

Assumptions regarding the relative effectiveness of hatchery-origin spawners also influence return-per-spawner patterns for the two steelhead production areas (Wenatchee/Entiat and Methow/Okanogan). Under the assumption that hatchery and wild spawners are both contributing to the subsequent generation of natural returns, return-per-spawner levels have been consistently below 1.0 since 1976. Under this scenario, natural production would be expected to decline rapidly in the absence of hatchery spawners. Under the assumption that hatchery fish returning to the upper Columbia River do not contribute to natural production, return-per-spawner levels were above 1 until the late 1980s. Return-per-spawner estimates subsequently dropped below replacement (1.0) and remained low until the mid-1990s (and beyond). Nonetheless, the actual contribution of hatchery returns to natural spawning remains a key uncertainty for UCR steelhead.

Limiting Factors

This DPS occupies the Columbia River upstream from the Yakima River. The streams in this region primarily drain the Northern Cascade Mountains of Washington State. The river valleys are deeply dissected and maintain low gradients except for the extreme headwaters. Stream flow in this area is provided by melting snowpack, groundwater, and runoff from alpine glaciers. This leads to exceedingly cold stream temperatures which, in turn, may lead to some of the oldest ages for smolts on record—up to seven years. Habitat in the area has been degraded by a number of factors, primarily high temperatures, excess sediment, outright habitat loss, degraded channels, impaired floodplains, and reduced stream flow. All of these factors (and others) have negatively affected the DPS' PCEs to the extent that it was necessary to list them under the ESA (Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board 2007; NOAA Fisheries 2011):

- Adverse effects related to the mainstem Columbia River hydropower system
- Impaired tributary fish passage
- Degradation of floodplain connectivity and function, channel structure and complexity, riparian areas, large woody debris recruitment, stream flow, and water quality
- Hatchery-related effects
- Predation and competition
- Harvest-related effects

Status Summary

Several factors—both population- and habitat-related have caused this DPS to decline to the point that it is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. While there has been some improvement in a number of areas, particularly in the realm of recent returns, it is not enough to prevent them from being threatened. Overall, Ford et al. (2011) found this species to be at high risk for all four VSP parameters in all four of its populations.

Middle Columbia River Steelhead

MCR steelhead were first listed as a threatened species on March 5, 1999 (64 FR 14517). That status was reaffirmed on January 5, 2006 (71 FR 834); the listing includes all naturally spawned steelhead populations beginning upstream from the Wind River in Washington and the Hood River in Oregon and proceeding to the Yakima River, Washington (see Figure 1). It does not include fish from the Snake River basin. Fish from seven artificial propagation programs were also listed—the Touchet River, Satus Creek, Toppenish Creek, Naches River, Upper Yakima River, Umatilla River, and Deschutes River stocks, that listing was reaffirmed on April 14, 2014 (79 FR 20802). A recovery plan is available for this species (NMFS 2009b).

Spatial Structure and Diversity

MCR steelhead are predominantly summer steelhead, but winter-run fish are found in the Klickitat River and Fifteenmile Creek. Most MCR steelhead smolt at two years and spend one to two years in salt water before re-entering fresh water, where they may remain for up to a year before spawning. Historically, the species was made up of five major population groups (MPGs), one of which—Willow Creek—has been extirpated. The four remaining MPGs comprise 17 extant populations and two that have been extirpated (see Table 7).

Table 7. MPGs, populations, and scores for the key elements (A&P, diversity, and SS/D) used to determine current overall viability risk for MCR steelhead (NMFS 2009; Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015). Risk ratings included very low (VL), low (L), moderate (M), high (H), very high (VH), and extirpated (E). Maintained (MT) population status indicates that the population does not meet the criteria for a viable population but does support ecological functions and preserve options for recovery of the DPS.

Major Population Group	Population (Watershed)	A&P	Diversity	Integrated SS/D	Overall Viability Risk
Cascade Eastern Slope Tributaries	Fifteenmile Creek	L	L	L	Viable
	Klickitat River	M	M	M	MT?
	Eastside Deschutes River	L	M	M	Viable
	Westside Deschutes River	H	M	M	H*
	Rock Creek	H	M	M	H?
	White Salmon				E*
	Crooked River				E*
John Day River	Upper Mainstem	M	M	M	MT
	North Fork	VL	L	L	Highly Viable
	Middle Fork	M	M	M	MT
	South Fork	M	M	M	MT
	Lower Mainstem	M	M	M	MT
Walla Walla and Umatilla rivers	Umatilla River	M	M	M	MT
	Touchet River	M	M	M	H
	Walla Walla River	M	M	M	MT
Yakima River	Satus Creek	M	M	M	Viable (MT)
	Toppenish Creek	M	M	M	Viable (MT)
	Naches River	H	M	M	H
	Upper Yakima	H	H	H	H

* Re-introduction efforts underway (NMFS 2009).

Hatchery fish stray to spawn naturally throughout the range of the species. Estimates of the proportion of hatchery-origin natural spawners range from low (Yakima, Walla Walla, and John Day Rivers) to moderate (Umatilla and Deschutes Rivers) (NMFS 2003). Most hatchery production is derived primarily from within-basin stocks. One recent area of concern is the increase in the number of Snake River hatchery steelhead that stray and spawn naturally within the Deschutes River subbasin. In addition, one of the main threats cited in NMFS' listing decision for this species was the fact that hatchery fish constituted a steadily increasing proportion of MCR steelhead natural escapement (62 FR 43937). Straying frequencies into at least the Lower John Day River are high. Out-of-basin hatchery stray proportions, although reduced, remain very high in the Deschutes River basin.

Abundance and Productivity

Escapements to all extant MPGs have recently shown overall upward trends, though some tributary counts in the Deschutes River have been moving downward for years and the Yakima River is still recovering from extremely low abundance in the 1980s. The John Day River represents the largest native, naturally-spawning stock in the species. The combined spawner surveys for the John Day River showed spawner declines of about 15% per year from 1985 to 1999, but trends have largely been up since then (NMFS 2003, Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015) and the North Fork John Day population, for instance is a very low risk to abundance and productivity factors. When we proposed to list these fish, we cited low returns to the Yakima River, poor abundance estimates for the Klickitat River and Fifteenmile Creek winter steelhead, and overall declines among naturally-producing stocks. However, recent dam counts show an overall increase in MCR steelhead abundance and a relatively stable naturally-produced component.

The species' populations are generally considered to be at medium to low risk with respect to abundance and productivity, but a few populations remain at high risk (see Table 7). On a positive note, the most recent 20-year productivity averages are showing greater-than-replacement levels in all populations for which we have data. Moreover, from the year 2004 through the year 2009, the five-year average return to the ESU was 14,364 adult fish (Ford 2011). Updated surveys running through 2011 showed that the spawner returns to the DPS from 2007 through 2011 totaled an average of about 19,570 fish, of which approximately 91% (or 17,809 fish) were of natural origin-- (SPS Database—Query April, 2014). More recent numbers can be gleaned from expanding dam counts on the Yakima River. For the 2014 year class, 4,255 natural fish have returned to the Yakima (AMIP), that number needs to be expanded by 35% due to run timing (Ritchie Graves, NMFS, pers. comm. April 17, 2015), so the actual number is 5,744 adults. The Yakima River produces approximately one-third of the fish in the DPS, so that means approximately 17,232 natural adults returned to the DPS as a whole. Given that natural fish make up 91% of all the fish in the DPS, that means the total return was on the order of 18,782 adults.

Juvenile abundance estimates are published each spring in an annual memorandum estimating percentage of listed Pacific salmon and steelhead smolts arriving at various locations in the Columbia River basin. The averages of the five most recent projections for the MCR juvenile outmigration are displayed below.

Table 8. Recent Five-Year Average Projected Outmigrations for MCR Steelhead (Dey 2012; Zabel 2013; Zabel 2014; Zabel 2015, Zabel 2016).

Origin	Outmigration
Natural	448,242
Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped*	347,853
Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose*	202,573

*When the above species was listed, NMFS included certain artificially propagated (hatchery-origin) populations in the listing. Some of those listed fish have had their adipose fins clipped at their respective hatcheries and some have not.

The natural abundance number should be viewed with caution, however, as it only addresses one of several juvenile life stages. Moreover, deriving any juvenile abundance estimate is complicated by a host of variables, including the facts that: (1) spawner counts and associated sex ratios and fecundity estimates can vary widely between years; (2) multiple juvenile age classes (fry, parr, smolt) are present yet comparable data sets may not exist for all of them; (3) it is very difficult to distinguish between non-listed juvenile rainbow trout and listed juvenile steelhead; and (4) survival rates between life stages are poorly understood and subject to a multitude of natural and human-induced variables (e.g., predation, floods, fishing, etc.). The numbers—especially for the natural component, are therefore probably greater than those displayed.

Limiting Factors

The major limiting factors for MCR steelhead are degraded tributary habitat conditions, impaired mainstem and tributary passage, hatchery related effects, and predation, competition, and disease (NMFS 2009 (recovery plan)). The threats contributing to the limiting factors and causes for a salmonid species' decline are often described in terms of the "four Hs" – habitat (usually relating to the effects of land use and tributary water use), hydropower, harvest, and hatcheries. Climate change also represents a potentially significant threat to salmon and steelhead. With regard to tributary habitat, MCR steelhead are subject to the detrimental effects associated with degraded riparian areas, reduced LWD recruitment, altered sediment routing, low or altered stream flows, degraded water quality especially high water temperatures), impaired floodplain connectivity/function, altered channel structure/complexity, and impaired fish passage. MCR steelhead experience impaired passage at up to four mainstem Columbia River dams and blocked/difficult passage in nearly all main tributaries except the John Day River. The main problems associated with hatchery programs involve out-of-basin hatchery fish straying onto the spawning grounds in all MPGs (especially the Deschutes River). MCR steelhead also are subject to predation (from birds, other fish, and pinnipeds) and disease (primarily in the mainstem) and competition (primarily with rainbow trout) largely in the tributaries—particularly in the Deschutes River (NMFS 2009 (recovery plan)).

The limiting factors identified in the recovery plan are:

- Degradation of floodplain connectivity and function, channel structure and complexity, riparian areas, fish passage, stream substrate, stream flow, and water quality
- Mainstem Columbia River hydropower-related impacts
- Degraded estuarine and nearshore marine habitat
- Hatchery-related effects
- Harvest-related effects
- Effects of predation, competition, and disease.

Status Summary

Several factors—both population- and habitat-related—have caused this species to decline to the point that it is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. While there has been some improvement in a number of areas, particularly with regard to the MCR steelhead's productivity and strong natural component, it is not enough to prevent them from being threatened. Nonetheless, there is some cause for optimism in that the biological requirement risk factors for the species are currently moderate to low in almost every population (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015).

Snake River Spr/sum Chinook Salmon

Snake River spr/sum Chinook salmon were first listed as threatened on April 22, 1992 (NOAA 1992). At the time, it included all natural-origin populations in the Tucannon, Grande Ronde, Imnaha, and Salmon Rivers. Some or all of the fish returning to several of the hatchery programs were also listed, including those returning to the Tucannon River, Imnaha River, and Grande Ronde River hatcheries, and to the Sawtooth, Pahsimeroi, and McCall hatcheries on the Salmon River. When NMFS re-examined the status of these fish, we determined that they still warranted listing as threatened, but we expanded to 15 the list of hatchery programs contributing fish considered to constitute part of the species. Subsequently that list was reduced to the programs displayed in the table below (79 FR 20802). Under the final listing in 2005, the section 4(d) protections, and limits on them, apply to natural and hatchery threatened salmon with an intact adipose fin, but not to listed hatchery fish that have had their adipose fin removed. This document evaluates impacts on both listed natural and listed hatchery fish. We are developing a recovery plan for this species.

Table 9. List of Hatchery Stocks Included in the SR Spr/sum Chinook Salmon ESU.

Artificial Propagation Program	Run	Location (State)
Tucannon River Program*	Spring	Tucannon River (Washington)
Lostine River (captive*/conventional)	Summer	Grande Ronde (Oregon)
Catherine Creek (captive/conventional)	Summer	Grande Ronde (Oregon)
Lookingglass Hatchery (reintroduction)	Summer	Grande Ronde (Oregon)
Upper Grande Ronde (captive/conventional)	Summer	Grande Ronde (Oregon)
Imnaha River	Spring/ Summer	Imnaha River (Oregon)
Big Sheep Creek	Spring/ Summer	Imnaha River (Oregon)
McCall Hatchery	Summer	South Fork Salmon River (Idaho)
Johnson Creek Artificial Propagation Enhancement*	Summer	East Fork South Fork Salmon River (Idaho)
Pahsimeroi Hatchery	Summer	Salmon River (Idaho)
Sawtooth Hatchery	Spring	Upper Mainstem Salmon River (Idaho)

* denotes programs that were listed as part of the 1999 listing of the ESU

Structure and Diversity

The present range of spawning and rearing habitat for naturally spawned SR spring/summer Chinook salmon is primarily limited to the Salmon, Grande Ronde, Imnaha, and Tucannon River subbasins. Historically, the Salmon River system may have supported more than 40% of the total return of spring/summer-run Chinook salmon to the Columbia River system (e.g., Fulton 1968). Most SR spring/summer Chinook salmon enter individual subbasins from May through September. Juvenile SR spring/summer Chinook salmon emerge from spawning gravels from February through June (Peery and Bjornn 1991). Typically, after rearing in their nursery streams for about one year, smolts begin migrating seaward in April and May (Bugert et al. 1990, Cannamela 1992). After reaching the mouth of the Columbia River, spring/summer Chinook salmon probably inhabit nearshore areas before beginning their northeast Pacific Ocean migration, which lasts two to three years.

This ESU includes production areas characterized by spring- and summer-timed returns, and combinations from the two adult timing patterns. Runs classified as spring-run Chinook salmon are counted at Bonneville Dam beginning in early March and ending the first week of June; runs classified as summer-run Chinook salmon return to the Columbia River from June through August. Returning fish hold in deep mainstem and tributary pools until late summer, when they emigrate up into tributary areas and spawn. In general, spring-run type Chinook salmon tend to spawn in higher-elevation reaches of major Snake River tributaries in mid- through late August, and summer-run Chinook salmon spawn approximately one month later than spring-run fish. Summer-run Chinook salmon tend to spawn lower in the Snake River drainages, although their spawning areas often overlap with spring-run spawners.

The South Fork and Middle Fork Salmon River currently support the bulk of natural production in the drainage. Two large tributaries entering above the confluence of the Middle Fork Salmon River, the Lemhi and Pahsimeroi Rivers drain broad alluvial valleys and are believed to have historically supported substantial, relatively productive anadromous fish runs. Returns into the upper Salmon River tributaries were reestablished after passage was opened around Sunbeam Dam on the mainstem Salmon River downstream of Stanley in 1934.

SR spring/summer Chinook salmon are produced at a number of artificial production facilities in the Snake River basin. Much of the production was initiated under the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan (LSRCP). Lyons Ferry Hatchery serves as a rearing station for Tucannon River spring-run Chinook salmon broodstock. Rapid River Hatchery and McCall Hatchery provide rearing support for a regionally derived summer-run Chinook salmon broodstock released into lower Salmon River areas. Two major hatchery programs operate in the upper Salmon Basin—the Pahsimeroi and Sawtooth facilities. Since the mid-1990s, small-scale natural stock supplementation studies and captive breeding efforts have been initiated in the Snake River basin. Historically, releases from broodstock originating outside the basin constituted a relatively small fraction of the total release into the basin. The 1998 Chinook salmon status review (Myers et al. 1998) identified concerns regarding the use of the Rapid River Hatchery stock reared at Lookingglass Hatchery in the Grande Ronde River basin. The Rapid River Hatchery stock was originally developed from broodstock collected from the spring-run Chinook salmon returns to historical production areas above the Hells Canyon Dam complex.

One threat to diversity from hatchery introgression—the use of the Rapid River Hatchery stock in Grande Ronde drainage hatchery programs—has been phased out since the late 1990s. In addition, a substantial proportion of marked returns of Rapid River Hatchery stock released in the Grande Ronde River have been intercepted and removed at the Lower Granite Dam ladder and at some tributary-level weirs. Carcass survey data indicate large declines in hatchery contributions to natural spawning in areas previously subject to Rapid River Hatchery stock strays.

Table 10. MPGs, populations, and scores for the key elements (A&P, diversity, and SS/D) used to determine current overall viability risk for SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon (NWFSC 2015). Risk ratings included very low (VL), low (L), moderate (M), high (H), very high (VH), and extirpated (E).

Major Population Groups	Spawning Populations (Watershed)	A&P	Diversity	Integrated SS/D	Overall Viability Risk
Lower Snake River	Tucannon River	H	M	M	H
	Asotin River				E
Grande Ronde and Imnaha rivers	Wenaha River	H	M	M	H
	Lostine/Wallowa River	H	M	M	H
	Minam River	H	M	M	H
	Catherine Creek	H	M	M	H
	Upper Grande Ronde R.	H	M	H	H
	Imnaha River	H	M	M	H
	Big Sheep Creek				E
	Lookingglass Creek				E
South Fork Salmon River	Little Salmon River	*	*	*	H
	South Fork mainstem	H	M	M	H
	Secesh River	H	L	L	H
	EF/Johnson Creek	H	L	L	H
Middle Fork Salmon River	Chamberlin Creek	H	L	L	H
	Big Creek	H	M	M	H
	Lower MF Salmon	H	M	M	H
	Camas Creek	H	M	M	H
	Loon Creek	H	M	M	H
	Upper MF Salmon	H	M	M	H
	Sulphur Creek	H	M	M	H
	Bear Valley Creek	H	L	L	H
	Marsh Creek	H	L	L	H
Upper Salmon River	N. Fork Salmon River	H	L	L	H
	Lemhi River	H	H	H	H
	Pahsimeroi River	H	H	H	H
	Upper Salmon-lower mainstem	H	L	L	H
	East Fork Salmon River	H	H	H	H
	Yankee Fork	H	H	H	H
	Valley Creek	H	M	M	H
	Upper Salmon main	H	M	M	H
	Panther Creek				E

* Insufficient data.

Abundance

No direct estimates of historical spring/summer Chinook returns to the Snake River are available. Chapman (1986) estimated that the Columbia River produced 2.5 million to 3.0 million spring and summer Chinook per year in the late 1800s. Total spring and summer Chinook production from the Snake basin contributed a substantial proportion of those returns; the total annual production of SR spring/summer Chinook may have been in excess of 1.5 million adult returns per year (Matthews and Waples 1991). Returns to Snake River tributaries had dropped to roughly 100,000 adults per year by the late 1960s (Fulton 1968). Increasing hatchery production contributed to subsequent years' returns, masking a continued decline in natural production.

The 1997-2001 geometric mean total return for spring/summer Chinook was slightly more than 6,000 fish. This was a marked improvement over the previous ten years when the geometric mean return was 3,076. That increase continued relatively steadily through 2004, when 97,946 adults returned (including jacks), but dropped off precipitously in 2005 when only 39,126 fish (including jacks) returned above Ice Harbor Dam (FPC 2005). The increases from 2001 through 2004 are generally thought to have been a result of good ocean conditions for rearing and good Columbia River flows for outmigration. But even with generally better trends in recent years, no population of spring/summer Chinook is known to be meeting its interim recovery goals (Good et al. 2005). In fact, the most recent return numbers to individual populations show most of the runs to be at less than half the desired levels (Good et al 2005). Overall, from the year 2008 through the year 2011, the four-year average return to the ESU was 11,819 adult fish (SPS query April 2014); of these, approximately 82% were of natural origin. The figures just quoted demonstrate that there is some degree of variability in the various sources for returning adult numbers. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to take all the various factors into account (survey types, data gaps, various dam counts, hatchery vs. wild components, etc.) and clearly and accurately determine what the returns actually are. Nonetheless, the figures we believe to be the most likely to represent the actual returns come from the U.S. v. Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) numbers derived from dam counts and complied by the WDFW (WDFW 2013). These numbers are widely used throughout the region for management purposes (particularly in setting harvest quotas), and at this point represent the very best available scientific and technical knowledge to which we have access. The most recent year for which these numbers have been calculated and published is 2014. That year, the SR spr/sum Chinook total return to Lower Granite Dam was 31,208 natural adults (this count includes the Tucannon River)(AMIP). The most recent four-year average to that date was 23,449 fish. Given that these fish comprise approximately 82% of the total run, it signifies that the total return for 2014 was 38,058 fish and the most recent four-year average was 28,596 adults.

Juvenile abundance estimates are published each spring in an annual memorandum estimating percentage of listed Pacific salmon and steelhead smolts arriving at various locations in the Columbia River basin. The averages of the five most recent projections for the SR spr/sum Chinook salmon juvenile outmigration are displayed below.

Table 11. Recent Five-Year Average Projected Outmigrations for SR spr/sum Chinook Salmon (Dey 2012; Zabel 2013; Zabel 2014; Zabel 2015, Zabel 2016).

Origin	Outmigration
Natural	1,397,403
Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped*	4,288,088
Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose*	1,115,848

*When the above species was listed, NMFS included certain artificially propagated (hatchery-origin) populations in the listing. Some of those listed fish have had their adipose fins clipped at their respective hatcheries and some have not.

The natural abundance number should be viewed with caution, however, as it only addresses one of several juvenile life stages. Moreover, deriving any juvenile abundance estimate is complicated by a host of variables, including the facts that: (1) spawner counts and associated sex ratios and fecundity estimates can vary widely between years; (2) multiple juvenile age classes (fry, parr, smolt) are present yet comparable data sets may not exist for all of them; (3) it is very difficult to distinguish between non-listed juvenile rainbow trout and listed juvenile steelhead; and (4) survival rates between life stages are poorly understood and subject to a multitude of natural and human-induced variables (e.g., predation, floods, fishing, etc.).

Productivity

Unfortunately, the available data on productivity is somewhat out of date. It is expected that the recovery planning process, the associated technical recovery team work, and research will produce a much clearer picture in the next year or so. In any case, as of 2001, the long-term trend and λ estimates were less than 1 for all natural production data sets, reflecting the large declines since the 1960s. Short-term trends and λ estimates were generally positive, with relatively large confidence intervals (Good et al. 2005). Grande Ronde and Imnaha data sets had the highest short-term growth rate estimates. Tucannon River, Poverty Flat (2000 and 2001 not included), and Sulphur Creek index areas had the lowest short-term λ estimates in the series.

Limiting Factors

This ESU occupies the Snake River Basin—including the headwaters of many streams—from its confluence with the Columbia River, upstream to the Hells Canyon complex of Dams. The area is generally a mix of dry forest, upland steppe, and semi-arid grassland. Streams tend to lose much of their flow through percolation and evaporation, and only the larger rivers that lie below the water table contain substantial flows year round. Extended dry intervals are very common in the Snake River Plateau. Mainstem Columbia and Snake River hydroelectric development has greatly disrupted migration corridors and affected flow regimes and estuarine habitat. There is habitat degradation in many areas related to forest, grazing, and mining practices, with major factors being lack of pools, high temperatures, low flows, poor overwintering conditions, and high sediment loads. Therefore all of these factors—along with harvest interceptions and hydropower system mortalities—have negatively affected the ESU to the extent that it was necessary to list it under the ESA:

- Degradation of floodplain connectivity and function, channel structure and complexity, riparian areas and large woody debris recruitment, stream flow, and water quality.
- Effects related to the hydropower system in the mainstem Columbia River, including reduced upstream and downstream fish passage, altered ecosystem structure and function, altered flows, and degraded water quality.
- Harvest-related effects.
- Predation.

Status Summary

Several factors—both population- and habitat-related–have caused this ESU to decline to the point that it is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. While there has been some improvement in a number of areas, particularly the 10-year average abundance, it is not enough to prevent them from being threatened. Ford (2011) rated every population in the ESU (all 28 of them) as being at “high risk” when the four VSP parameters were combined into an overall score for each. In general, those ratings were driven by high risk ratings for the abundance and productivity parameters.

Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon

Snake River fall Chinook salmon were first listed as threatened on April 22, 1992 (NOAA 1992). The ESU included all natural-origin populations of fall Chinook in the mainstem Snake River and several tributaries including the Tucannon, Grande Ronde, Salmon, and Clearwater Rivers. Fall Chinook salmon from the Lyons Ferry Hatchery were included in the ESU but were not listed. When NMFS re-examined the status of this species in 2005, we determined that it still warranted listing as threatened, but in this instance fish from four hatchery programs were considered part of the listed unit (413) (70 FR 37160). Under the final listing in 2005, the section 4(d) protections, and limits on them, apply to natural and hatchery threatened salmon with an intact adipose fin, but not to listed hatchery fish that have had their adipose fin removed.

This document evaluates impacts on both listed natural and listed hatchery fish. We are developing a recovery plan for this species.

Table 12. Listed Hatchery Stocks for the SR Fall Chinook ESU.

Artificial Propagation Program	Run	Location (State)
Lyons Ferry Hatchery	Fall	Snake River (Idaho)
Fall Chinook Acclimation Ponds Program – Pittsburg, Captain John, and Big Canyon ponds	Fall	Snake River (Idaho)
Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery – including North Lapwai Valley, Lakes Gulch, and Cedar Flat Satellite facilities	Fall	Snake and Clearwater Rivers (Idaho)
Oxbow Hatchery	Fall	Snake River (Oregon, Idaho)

Structure and Diversity

Adult SR fall Chinook salmon enter the Columbia River in July and migrate into the Snake River from August through October. Fall Chinook salmon generally spawn from October through November, and fry emerge from March through April. Downstream migration generally begins within several weeks of emergence (Becker 1970, Allen and Meekin 1973), and juveniles rear in backwaters and shallow water areas through mid-summer before smolting and migrating to the ocean—thus they exhibit an ocean-type juvenile history. Once in the ocean, they spend one to four years (usually three years) before beginning their spawning migration. Fall returns in the Snake River system are typically dominated by 4-year-old fish.

Fall Chinook salmon returns to the Snake River generally declined through the first half of the 20th century (Irving and Bjornn 1981). In spite of the declines, the Snake River basin remained the largest single natural production area for fall Chinook salmon in the Columbia River drainage into the early 1960s (Fulton 1968). The construction of a series of Snake River mainstem dams considerably reduced spawning and rearing habitat for SR fall Chinook salmon. Historically, the primary fall Chinook salmon spawning areas were located on the upper mainstem Snake River. Currently, natural spawning is limited to the area from the upper end of Lower Granite Reservoir to Hells Canyon Dam, the lower reaches of the Imnaha, Grande Ronde, Clearwater, and Tucannon Rivers, and small mainstem sections in the tailraces of the lower Snake River hydroelectric dams.

The Lyons Ferry Hatchery SR fall Chinook salmon broodstock has been used to supply a major natural spawning supplementation effort in recent years (Bugert et al. 1995). Facilities adjacent to major natural spawning areas have been used to acclimate release groups of yearling smolts. Additional releases of subyearlings have been made in the vicinity of the acclimation sites. The level of subyearling releases depends on the availability of sufficient broodstock to maintain the on-station program and the off-station yearling releases.

For a number of years starting in the 1990s, large numbers of unmarked subyearling Lyons Ferry Hatchery fall Chinook have been released from the acclimation sites. These fish contribute to adult returns over Lower Granite Dam, complicating natural production rate estimates (WDFW 2003). Escapement over Lower Granite Dam represents the majority of the SR fall Chinook salmon return. In addition, SR fall Chinook salmon return to the Tucannon River system (≤100 spawners per year based on redd counts) and to Lyons Ferry Hatchery (recent average returns to the facility have been approximately 1,100 fish per year) (Good et al. 2005).

Sampling marked returns determines the composition of the fall Chinook salmon run at Lower Granite Dam. Since the early 1980s, the run has consisted of three major components: unmarked returns of natural origin, marked returns from the Lyons Ferry Hatchery program, and strays from hatchery programs outside the mainstem Snake River. Although all three components of the fall run have increased in recent years, returns of Snake River–origin Chinook salmon have increased at a faster rate than hatchery strays. Before to the 1998–1999 status reviews, the 5-year average contribution of outside stocks to the escapement over Lower Granite Dam exceeded 26.2%. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, that proportion was 12.4%, with the contribution in 2001 being just over 8%. The drop in relative contribution by outside stocks reflects the disproportionate increase in returns of the Lyons Ferry Hatchery component, the systematic removal of marked hatchery fish at the Lower Granite Dam trap, and modifications to the Umatilla program to increase homing of fall Chinook salmon release groups intended to return to the Umatilla River. However, after that time period, hatchery spawners resumed an increasing trend (and now constitute approximately 78% of the returns), while the natural spawner trend flattened out (Ford 2011). The apparent leveling off of natural returns in spite of the increases in total brood year spawners may indicate that density dependent habitat effects are influencing production or that high hatchery proportions may be influencing natural production rates.

Abundance

No reliable estimates of historical abundance are available for this ESU. Because of their dependence on mainstem habitat for spawning, however, fall Chinook salmon probably have been affected by the development of irrigation and hydroelectric projects to a greater extent than any other species of salmon. It has been estimated that the mean number of adult SR fall Chinook salmon declined from 72,000 in the 1930s and 1940s to 29,000 during the 1950s. Despite this decline, the Snake River remained the most important natural production area for fall Chinook salmon in the entire Columbia River basin through the 1950s. The number of adults counted at the uppermost Snake River mainstem dams averaged 12,720 total spawners from 1964 to 1968, 3,416 spawners from 1969 to 1974, and 610 spawners from 1975 to 1980 (Waples et al. 1991).

Counts of natural-origin adult fish continued to decline through the 1980s, reaching a low of 78 individuals in 1990. Since then, the return of natural-origin fish to Lower Granite Dam has varied, but has generally increased. The 1999 NMFS Status Review Update noted increases in the Lower Granite Dam counts in the mid-1990s, and the upward trend in returns—the 2001 count over Lower Granite Dam exceeded 8,700 adult fall Chinook—has largely continued. The largest increase in fall Chinook returns to the Snake River spawning area was from the Lyons Ferry Snake River stock component. Returns there increased from under 200 per year before to 1998 to over 1,200 and 5,300 adults in 2000 and 2001, respectively. The increase includes returns from the on-station release program as well as returns from large supplementation releases above Lower Granite Dam. Moreover, from the year 2003 through the year 2008, the five-year average return to the ESU was 11,321 adult fish (Ford 2011); of these, approximately 22% were of natural origin. In the flowing years, those totals continued to increase; form 2009 through 2012, the four-year rolling mean was 34,524 fall Chinook returning over Ice harbor Dam (University of Washington, 2013). We do not know how many of those fish were natural, but the last year for which we have that data—2008—indicates that the natural fraction may be as small as 11% (NOAA 2013).

The figures just quoted demonstrate that there is some degree of variability in the various sources for returning adult numbers. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to take all the various factors into account (survey types, data gaps, various dam counts, hatchery vs. wild components, etc.) and clearly and accurately determine what the returns actually are. Nonetheless, the figures we believe to be the most likely to represent the actual returns come from the U.S. v. Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) numbers derived from dam counts and complied by the WDFW (WDFW 2013). These numbers are widely used throughout the region for management purposes (particularly in setting harvest quotas), and at this point represent the very best available scientific and technical knowledge to which we have access. The most recent year for which these numbers have been calculated and published is 2014. That year, the SR fall Chinook total return to Lower Granite Dam was 14,172 natural adults. The most recent four-year average to that date was 14,218 fish (AMIP). Given that these fish constitute approximately 11% of the total run, it signifies that the total return for 2014 was 128,836 fish and the most recent four year average was 129,254 adults.

Juvenile abundance estimates are published each spring in an annual memorandum estimating percentage of listed Pacific salmon and steelhead smolts arriving at various locations in the Columbia River basin. The averages of the five most recent projections for the fall Chinook salmon juvenile outmigration are displayed below.

Table 13. Recent Five-Year Average Projected Outmigrations for SR Fall Chinook Salmon (Dey 2012; Zabel 2013; Zabel 2014; Zabel 2015, Zabel 2016).

Origin	Outmigration
Natural	544,134
Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	2,8129,19
Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	3,161,673

The number of natural fish should be viewed with caution, however, as it only addresses one of several juvenile life stages. Moreover, deriving any juvenile abundance estimate is complicated by a host of variables, including the facts that: (1) spawner counts and associated sex ratios and fecundity estimates can vary considerably between years; (2) multiple juvenile age classes (fry, parr, smolt) are present yet comparable data sets may not exist for all of them; and (3) survival rates between life stages are poorly understood and subject to a multitude of natural and human-induced variables (e.g., predation, floods, fishing, etc.). Listed hatchery fish outmigration numbers are also affected by some of these factors, however releases from hatcheries are generally easier to quantify than is natural production.

Productivity

Productivity for this species has varied greatly over the years and is highly dependent upon hatchery effectiveness. The 1990–2001 estimates of the median population growth rate (λ) were 0.98, assuming a hatchery-spawning effectiveness of 1.0 (equivalent to that of wild spawners), and 1.137 with an assumed hatchery-spawning effectiveness of 0.0. The estimated long-term growth rate for SR fall Chinook salmon population (1975 – 2008) is generally a positive one. The various rates are 1.06 for total spawners, 1.04 if hatchery effectiveness is zero, and 0.90 if hatchery effectiveness is one (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015). So, while the overall trend is positive, there is some cause for concern regarding the increasing hatchery component.

Limiting Factors

SR fall Chinook salmon occupy the mainstem Snake River (and the lower reaches of some tributaries) from its confluence with the Columbia River up to the Hells Canyon complex of dams. Almost all historical spawning habitat in the Snake River was blocked by the Hells Canyon Dam complex. Much of the remaining habitat has been reduced by inundation from lower Snake River reservoirs. Spawning and rearing, habitats are affected largely by agriculture including water withdrawals, grazing, and riparian vegetation management disruption of migration corridors and affected flow regimes and estuarine habitat. Mainstem Columbia and Snake River hydroelectric development has disrupted migration corridors and affected flow regimes and estuarine habitat. All of these factors, along with harvest, have negatively affected the ESU to the extent that it was necessary to list them under the ESA, therefore we have identified these limiting factors:

- Degradation of floodplain connectivity and function and channel structure and complexity
- Harvest-related effects
- Loss of access to historical habitat above Hells Canyon and other Snake River dams
- Impacts from mainstem Columbia River and Snake River hydropower systems
- Hatchery-related effects
- Degraded estuarine and nearshore habitat.

Summary

Several factors—both population- and habitat-related have caused this ESU to decline to the point that it is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. While there have been some improvement in terms of both abundance and productivity in recent years, it is not enough to prevent them from being threatened and they are currently considered to be at moderate risk with regard to the VSP parameters (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015).

Snake River Steelhead

Snake River (SR) steelhead were listed as a threatened species on January 5, 2006 (71 FR 834); the listing includes all naturally spawning populations of steelhead in streams in the Snake River basin of southeast Washington, northeast Oregon, and Idaho. Six artificial propagation programs are considered part of the listed species (Table 14). Under the final listing in 2006, the section 4(d) protections, and limits on them, apply to natural and hatchery threatened salmon with an intact adipose fin, but not to listed hatchery fish that have had their adipose fin removed. This document evaluates impacts on both listed natural and listed hatchery fish. We are developing a recovery plan for this species.

Table 14. Listed Hatchery Populations of SR Steelhead.

Artificial Propagation Program	Run	Location (State)
Tucannon River *	Summer	Tucannon River (Washington)
Dworshak NFH/Clearwater FH	Summer	South Fork Clearwater River (Idaho)
Dworshak NFH	Summer	Clearwater R/North Fk Clearwater R (Idaho)
Dworshak NFH	Summer	Lolo Creek-Clearwater River (Idaho)

East Fork Salmon River	Summer	East Fork Salmon River (Idaho)
Little Sheep Creek/Imnaha River Hatchery (ODFW stock # 29) *	Summer	Imnaha River (Oregon)

* Denotes programs that were listed as part of the 1999 listing of the DPS

Structure and Diversity

SR steelhead are distributed throughout the Snake River drainage system, including tributaries in southwest Washington, eastern Oregon and north/central Idaho (NMFS 1996). Steelhead migrate a substantial distance from the ocean (up to 1,500 km) and use high elevation tributaries (typically 1,000-2,000 meters above sea level) for spawning and juvenile rearing. Steelhead occupy habitat that is considerably warmer and drier (on an annual basis) than other steelhead DPSs. Steelhead are generally classified as summer-run, based on their adult run timing patterns. Summer steelhead enter the Columbia River from late June to October. After holding over the winter, summer steelhead spawn during the following spring (March to May). Managers classify up-river summer steelhead runs into two groups based primarily on ocean age and adult size upon return to the Columbia River. A-run steelhead are predominately age-1 ocean fish while B-run steelhead are larger, predominated by age-2 ocean fish.

With the exception of the Tucannon River and some small tributaries to the mainstem Snake River, the tributary habitat used by SR steelhead is above Lower Granite Dam. Major groupings of populations and subpopulations can be found in the Grande Ronde River system, the Imnaha River drainage, the Clearwater River drainages, the South Fork Salmon River, the smaller mainstem tributaries before the confluence of the mainstem Snake River, the Middle Fork Salmon River, the Lemhi and Pahsimeroi Rivers, and the upper Salmon River tributaries.

Almost all artificial production of steelhead in the Snake River steelhead DPS has been associated with two major mitigation initiatives—the Lower Snake River Compensation Program (LSRCP) and the mitigation program for Dworshak Dam on the North Fork Clearwater River. The LSRCP is administered by the USFWS and was established as compensation for losses incurred as a result of the construction and operation of the four lower Snake River hydroelectric dams. Production under this initiative generally began in the mid-1980s. The Dworshak mitigation program provides artificial production as compensation for the loss of access to the North Fork Clearwater, a major historical production area. Dworshak Hatchery, completed in 1969, is the focus for that production. In all, hatchery releases in some 17 subbasins—covering nearly 60 different stocks of SR steelhead—total an average of over 10 million smolts a year (Good et al. 2005).

Table 15. MPGs, populations, and scores for the key elements (A&P, diversity, and SS/D) used to determine current overall viability risk for SRB steelhead (Ford 2011; NMFS 2011b, NWFSC 2015). Risk ratings included very low (VL), low (L), moderate (M), high (H), and very high (VH). Maintained (MT) population status indicates that the population does not meet the criteria for a viable population but does support ecological functions and preserve options for recovery of the DPS.

Major Population Group	Spawning Populations (Watershed)	A&P	Diversity	Integrated SS/D	Overall Viability Risk*
Lower Snake River	Tucannon River	**	M	M	H
	Asotin Creek	**	M	M	MT
Grande Ronde River	Lower Grande Ronde	**	M	M	Not rated
	Joseph Creek	VL	L	L	Highly viable
	Upper Grande Ronde	M	M	M	MT
	Wallowa River	**	L	L	H
Clearwater River	Lower Clearwater	M	L	L	MT
	South Fork Clearwater	H	M	M	H
	Lolo Creek	H	M	M	H
	Selway River	H	L	L	H
	Lochsa River	H	L	L	H
Salmon River	Little Salmon River	**	M	M	MT
	South Fork Salmon	**	L	L	H
	Secesh River	**	L	L	H
	Chamberlain Creek	**	L	L	H
	Lower MF Salmon	**	L	L	H
	Upper MF Salmon	**	L	L	H
	Panther Creek	**	M	H	H
	North Fork Salmon	**	M	M	MT
	Lemhi River	**	M	M	MT
	Pahsimeroi River	**	M	M	MT
	East Fork Salmon	**	M	M	MT
	Upper Main Salmon	**	M	M	MT
Imnaha	Imnaha River	M	M	M	MT

* There is uncertainty in these ratings due to a lack of population-specific data.
** Insufficient data.

Abundance

Although no direct historical estimates of production from the Snake River basin are available, the basin is believed to have supported more than half the total steelhead production from the Columbia River basin (Mallet 1974). There are some historical estimates of returns to portions of the drainage. Lewiston Dam, on the lower Clearwater River, began operation in 1927. Counts of steelhead passing through the adult fish ladder at the dam reached 40,000– 60,000 in the early 1960s (Cichosz et al. 2001). Based on relative drainage areas, the Salmon River basin likely supported substantial production as well. In the early 1960s, returns to the Grande Ronde and Imnaha Rivers may have exceeded 15,000 and 4,000 steelhead per year, respectively. Extrapolations from tag-recapture data indicate that the natural steelhead return to the Tucannon River may have exceeded 3,000 adults in the mid-1950s (Thompson et al. 1958).

The longest consistent indicator of steelhead abundance in the Snake River basin is derived from counts of natural-origin steelhead at the uppermost dam on the lower Snake River (Lower Granite Dam). According to these estimates, the abundance of natural-origin steelhead at the uppermost dam on the Snake River has declined from a 4-year average of 58,300 in 1964 to a 4-year average of 8,300 ending in 1998. In general, steelhead abundance declined sharply in the early 1970s, rebuilt modestly from the mid-1970s through the 1980s, and declined again during the 1990s. The 2001 count at Ice Harbor Dam was 255,726 with Lower Granite reporting 262,558 (both counts include hatchery fish and differ slightly from the PCSRF numbers, below). Numbers of natural steelhead increased to about 47,700 at Lower Granite in 2001 (FPC 2002). With a few exceptions, annual estimates of steelhead returns to specific production areas within the Snake River are not available. Annual estimates of returns are available for the Tucannon River, sections of the Grande Ronde River system, and the Imnaha River. A recent geometric mean abundance in the Tucannon River was lower than it was in the last status review. Returns to the other areas were generally higher than they were in the early 1990s (NMFS 2003). In 2001, only one population—Joseph Creek—was known to meet or exceed its interim target. The other eight were either at fractions of the interim target or were unknown. Overall, however, from the year 2004 through the year 2009, the five-year average return to the ESU was 162,323 adult fish (Ford 2011); of these, approximately 90% were of hatchery origin (PCSRF 2007). That recent upward trend has generally continued and the most recent four-year rolling geometric mean we have for this DPS is 195,721 returns over Ice Harbor Dam from 2009 through 2012 (University of Washington 2013).

The figures just quoted demonstrate that there is some degree of variability in the various sources for returning adult numbers. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to take all the various factors into account (survey types, data gaps, various dam counts, hatchery vs. wild components, etc.) and clearly and accurately determine what the returns actually are. Nonetheless, the figures we believe to be the most likely to represent the actual returns come from the U.S. v. Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) numbers derived from dam counts and complied by the WDFW (WDFW 2013). These numbers are widely used throughout the region for management purposes (particularly in setting harvest quotas), and at this point represent the very best available scientific and technical knowledge to which we have access. The most recent year for which these numbers have been calculated and published is 2014. That year, the SR steelhead total return to Lower Granite Dam was 43,803 natural adults (AMIP). And the most recent four-year average for those returns was 33,340. Given that these fish constitute approximately 10% of the total run, it signifies that the total return for 2014 was 438,000 fish and the 2011-2014 average was 333,400.

Juvenile abundance estimates are published each spring in an annual memorandum estimating percentage of listed Pacific salmon and steelhead smolts arriving at various locations in the Columbia River basin. The averages of the five most recent projections for the SR steelhead juvenile outmigration are displayed below.

Table 16. Recent Five-Year Average Projected Outmigrations for SR Steelhead (Dey 2012; Zabel 2013; Zabel 2014; Zabel 2015, Zabel 2016).

Origin	Outmigration
Natural	890,596
Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	3,370,663
Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	833,108

The natural abundance number should be viewed with caution, however, as it only addresses one of several juvenile life stages. Moreover, deriving any juvenile abundance estimate is complicated by a host of variables, including the facts that: (1) spawner counts and associated sex ratios and fecundity estimates can vary widely between years; (2) multiple juvenile age classes (fry, parr, smolt) are present yet comparable data sets may not exist for all of them; (3) it is very difficult to distinguish between non-listed juvenile rainbow trout and listed juvenile steelhead; and (4) survival rates between life stages are poorly understood and subject to a multitude of natural and human-induced variables (e.g., predation, floods, fishing, etc.).

Productivity

We only have good productivity data for two SR steelhead populations: Joseph Creek and the upper Grand Ronde River. Data for longer term trend analyses for the populations begin with estimates from the early 1970s and extend through 2009. The average trend over the full time period was a negative 1 to 5% per year for the Upper Grande Ronde and a positive 4% per year for Joseph Creek across the range of long term trend metrics (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015). Estimates of annual spawning escapements into the Upper Grande Ronde River (dam counts) fluctuated around lower levels for a prolonged period except for a peak in the mid-1980s and an increase in the most recent two years for which we have data. Estimated escapements in Joseph Creek were generally lower in the 1970s, and fluctuated around higher levels after also peaking in the mid-1980s. The aggregate Lower Granite Dam abundance estimates are available for years going back to the 1986- 87 cycle. The general trend in returns derived from those counts has been slightly positive across all groups for the last few years: that is, from 1995 through

2008, the trends for all spawners range from 0.98 to 1.11—depending on hatchery efficiency (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015). This trend has been slowly but steadily increasing since at least 1987. However, the fraction of hatchery spawners has also been increasing that entire time and, as noted, that trend remains an issue of concern.

Limiting factors

SR steelhead occupy the Snake River basin (including many tributary habitats) from its confluence with the Columbia River upstream to the Hells Canyon complex of dams.
The area is generally a mix of dry forest, upland steppe, and semi-arid grassland. Streams tend to lose much of their flow through percolation and evaporation, and only the larger rivers that lie below the water table contain substantial flows year round. Extended dry intervals are very common in the Snake River Plateau. In addition, much of this DPS's habitat has been affected by logging, mining, water withdrawals, and hydropower development. As a result of these activities and tribal and recreation harvest, the main limiting factors for this DPS are (NMFS 2011b; NMFS 2011c):

- Adverse effects related to the mainstem Columbia River hydropower system
- Impaired tributary fish passage
- Degradation of d floodplain connectivity and function, channel structure and complexity, riparian areas and large woody debris recruitment, stream flow, and water quality
- Increased water temperature
- Harvest-related effects, particularly for B-run steelhead
- Predation
- Genetic diversity effects from out-of-population hatchery releases

Status Summary

Several factors—both population- and habitat-related have caused this DPS to decline to the point that it is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. While there have been some improvements in the species' status in recent years (particularly since the lows of the early 1990s), it is not enough to prevent them from continuing to be threatened. In general, almost all of the populations in this DPS are considered to be at low to moderate risk for factors relating to spatial structure and diversity, and moderate to high risk for factors relating to abundance and productivity. And only one population out of 24 (Joseph Creek) is known to have exceeded the ICTRT's viability criterion for returning spawners.

Snake River Sockeye Salmon

The SR sockeye salmon ESU was listed as endangered on November 20, 1991 (NOAA 1991). It includes all populations of sockeye salmon from the Snake River Basin, Idaho (extant populations occur only in the Salmon River subbasin). Under NMFS' interim policy on artificial propagation (NOAA 1993a), the progeny of fish from a listed population that are propagated artificially are considered part of the listed species and are protected under ESA. Thus, SR sockeye salmon produced in the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's (IDFG's) captive broodstock program are included in the Listed ESU. There is a draft recovery plan for this species (NMFS 2014).

Sockeye salmon adults enter the Columbia River primarily during June and July. Arrival of natural-origin adults at the Redfish Lake Creek trap and broodstock-origin adults at the trap and the Sawtooth Hatchery weir peaks in August. Natural spawning occurs only in Redfish Lake and primarily in October (Bjornn et al. 1968). Eggs hatch in the spring between 80 and 140 days after spawning. Fry remain in the gravel for three to five weeks, emerge from April through May, and move immediately into the lake. Once there, juveniles feed on plankton for one to three years before they migrate to the ocean (Bell 1986). Migrants leave Redfish Lake during late April through May (Bjornn et al. 1968) and travel almost 900 miles to the Pacific Ocean. Smolts reaching the ocean remain inshore or within the influence of the Columbia River plume during the early summer months. Later, they migrate through the northeast Pacific Ocean (Hart 1973, Hart and Dell 1986). Sockeye salmon spend two to three years in the Pacific Ocean and return in their fourth or fifth year of life.

Structure and Diversity

Four adult sockeye salmon returned to Redfish Lake in 1991; they were taken into captivity to join several hundred smolts collected in spring 1991 as they outmigrated from Redfish Lake. The adults were spawned and their progeny reared to adulthood along with the outmigrants as part of a captive broodstock program, whose major goal was to perpetuate the gene pool for a short period of time (one or two generations) to give managers a chance to identify and address the most pressing threats to the population. Genetic data collected from the returning adults and the outmigrants showed that they were genetically similar but distinct from the Fishhook Creek kokanee. However, otolith microchemistry data indicated that many of the outmigrants did have a resident female parent. These results inspired a search of Redfish Lake for another population of resident fish that was genetically similar to the sockeye. These efforts led to discovery of a relatively small number (perhaps a few hundred) kokanee-sized fish that spawn at approximately the same time and place as the sockeye. These fish, termed residual sockeye salmon, are considered to be part of the listed ESU. Subsequent genetic analysis (Waples et al. 1991a) established the following relationships between extant populations of *O. nerka* from the Stanley Basin and other populations in the Pacific Northwest:

• Native populations of *O. nerka* from the Stanley Basin (including Redfish Lake sockeye salmon and kokanee and Alturas Lake kokanee) are genetically quite divergent from all other North American *O. nerka* populations that have been examined.

• Within this group, Redfish Lake sockeye and kokanee are genetically distinct, and Alturas Lake kokanee are most similar to Redfish Lake kokanee.

• Two gene pools of *O. nerka* were identified in Stanley Lake—one may be the remnant of a native gene pool that survived rotenone treatments in the lake, while the other can be traced to introductions from Wizard Falls Hatchery in Oregon.

• No trace of the original gene pool of *O. nerka* has been found in Pettit Lake.

The population that spawned in Pettit Lake in recent decades can be traced to introductions of kokanee from northern Idaho; those populations in turn can be traced to stock transfers of Lake Whatcom (Washington) kokanee early in the last century. Between 1991 and 1998, 16 naturally produced adult sockeye salmon returned to the weir at Redfish Lake and were incorporated into the captive broodstock program. This program, overseen by the Stanley Basin Sockeye Technical Oversight Committee, produced groundbreaking research in captive broodstock technology. The program used three different rearing sites to minimize chances of catastrophic failure and produced several hundred thousand eggs and juveniles, as well as several hundred adults, for release into the wild. The program reached a milestone in 2000, when more than 200 adults from the program returned to Redfish Lake. Currently, the captive broodstock program is being maintained as a short-term safety net, pending decisions about longer-term approaches to recovery of the ESU.

The Snake River Salmon Recovery Team (Bevan et al. 1994) suggested that to be considered recovered under ESA, the Snake River sockeye salmon ESU should have viable populations in three different lakes, with at least 1,000 naturally produced spawners per year in Redfish Lake and at least 500 in each of two other Stanley Basin lakes. As a step toward addressing this recommendation, progeny from the Redfish Lake captive broodstock program were released in Pettit and Alturas lakes as well. In 1991, about 100 outmigrants from Alturas Lake were collected at the same time as the Redfish Lake outmigrants and reared to maturity as a separate population in captivity. However, because of funding and space limitations and uncertainties about priorities for propagating this population, the resulting adults were released into the lake rather than being kept for spawning and another generation of captive rearing. Because the Alturas Lake kokanee spawn earlier than Redfish Lake sockeye salmon, and the kokanee spawn in the inlet stream, it is hoped that the introduction of Redfish Lake sockeye into Alturas Lake will not adversely affect this native gene pool.

Abundance

Given the dire status of the species under any criteria (a recent peak of 150 natural and 950 hatchery adult sockeye returned to the Stanley basin in 2011), NMFS considers the captive broodstock and its progeny essential for recovery. Between 1997 and 2005, approximately 400 hatchery sockeye returned to the Stanley basin, total. Only 16 naturally produced adults returned to Redfish Lake between the time the Snake River sockeye ESU was listed as an endangered species in 1991 and 2005. Since that time, there has been a considerable improvement in the sockeye returns. From 2009 through 2012, an average of 1,348 adult sockeye (all from the broodstock program) passed Lower Granite Dam on their way to Redfish Lake. The year 2012 saw the lowest numbers of that period—with only 470 fish being counted at Lower Granite Dam. These numbers have been updated somewhat with the 2014 returns—which numbered 2,786 fish. The new four-year average return to Lower Granite Dam (through 2014) is 1,373.

Each spring, the NWFSC produces a memorandum estimating the number of listed Pacific salmon and steelhead smolts expected to arrive at various locations in the Columbia River basin. The averages of the five most recent projections for the SR sockeye salmon juvenile emigrants are displayed below.

Table 17. Recent Five-Year Average Projected Outmigrations for SR Sockeye (Dey 2012; Zabel 2013; Zabel 2014; Zabel 2015, Zabel 2016).

Origin	Outmigration
Natural	18,300
Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped*	161,380

*When the above species was listed, NMFS included fish from a captive broodstock program. Those listed fish have had their adipose fins clipped.

The Biological Review Team (BRT), reviewing the status of the species in 2010 (Ford 2011), found that the recent increase in returns of hatchery-reared Snake River sockeye has reduced the risk of immediate loss, but that levels of naturally produced returns remain extremely low. Although the biological risk status of the ESU appeared to be on an improving trend (NWFSC 2015), the new information did not indicate a change in category (extremely high risk) since the 2005 BRT status review.

Productivity

The only real source of productivity for this ESU is the Redfish Lake Captive Broodstock Program. Unfortunately, the BRT's assessment of the effects of artificial propagation on ESU extinction risk concluded that the Redfish Lake Captive Broodstock Program does not substantially reduce the extinction risk of the ESU in-total (70 FR 37160). Nonetheless, The Artificial Propagation Evaluation Workshop noted that the Captive Broodstock Program has *prevented* likely extinction of the ESU. This program has increased the total number of anadromous adults, increased the number of lakes in which sockeye salmon are present in the upper Salmon River (Sawtooth Valley), and preserved what genetic diversity remained in the ESU at the time the population went through a bottleneck (circa 1990). The majority of the ESU resides in the captive program composed of only a few hundred fish. The long-term effects of captive rearing are unknown. The consideration of artificial propagation does not substantially mitigate the BRT's assessment of extreme risks to ESU abundance, productivity, spatial structure, and diversity.

Limiting Factors

SR sockeye travel further inland—approximately 900 miles—than any other Pacific salmon. They pass through mainstem Snake and Salmon Rivers, the South Fork Salmon River and move up to the Stanley basin to their one remaining spawning ground in Redfish Lake, Idaho. The area is generally a mix of dry forest, upland steppe, and semi-arid grassland. The key factor limiting recovery of SR sockeye salmon ESU is survival outside of the Stanley Basin. Portions of the migration corridor in the Salmon River are impaired by reduced water quality and elevated temperatures (Idaho Department of Environmental Quality 2011). The natural hydrological regime in the upper mainstem Salmon River Basin has been altered by water withdrawals. Survival rates from Lower Granite dam to the spawning grounds are low in some years (e.g., average of 31%, range of 0-67% for 1991-1999) (Keefer et al. 2008). Keefer et al. (2008) conducted a radio tagging study on adult SR sockeye salmon passing upstream from Lower Granite Dam in 2000 and concluded that high in-river mortalities could be explained by "a combination of high migration corridor water temperatures and poor initial fish condition or parasite loads." Keefer et al. (2008) also examined current run timing of SR sockeye salmon versus records from the early 1960s, and concluded that an apparent shift to earlier run timing recently may reflect increased mortalities for later migrating adults. In the Columbia and lower Snake River migration corridor, predation rates on juvenile sockeye salmon are unknown, but terns and cormorants consume 12% of all salmon smolts reaching the estuary, and piscivorous fish consume an estimated 8% of migrating juvenile salmon (NOAA Fisheries 2011).

Status Summary

Ford et al. (2011) concluded that the Snake River sockeye ESU continues to be "in danger of extinction." The ESU's status is such that there must be substantial increases in its abundance, productivity, and diversity and the species must be successfully reintroduced in more of its historical range if it is to survive. The increased abundance of hatchery reared Snake River sockeye reduces the risk of immediate loss, but levels of naturally produced sockeye returns remain extremely low. As a result, and again despite recent improvements in adult returns, Ford et al. (2011) determined that the species is still substantially at risk with regard to all VSP parameters.

2.2.3 Status of the Species' Critical Habitat

We review the status of designated critical habitat affected by the proposed action by examining the condition and trends of essential physical and biological features throughout the designated area. These features are essential to the conservation of the listed species because they support one or more of the species' life stages (e.g., sites with conditions that support spawning, rearing, migration and foraging).

For salmon and steelhead, NMFS ranked watersheds within designated critical habitat at the scale of the fifth-field hydrologic unit code (HUC_5) in terms of the conservation value they provide to each listed species they support.[3] The conservation rankings are high, medium, or low.

[3] The conservation value of a site depends upon "(1) the importance of the populations associated with a site to the ESU [or DPS] conservation, and (2) the contribution of that site to

To determine the conservation value of each watershed to species viability, NMFS's critical habitat analytical review teams (CHARTs) evaluated the quantity and quality of habitat features (for example, spawning gravels, wood and water condition, side channels), the relationship of the area compared to other areas within the species' range, and the significance to the species of the population occupying that area (NOAA Fisheries 2005). Thus, even a location that has poor quality of habitat could be ranked with a high conservation value if it were essential due to factors such as limited availability (*e.g.*, one of a very few spawning areas), a unique contribution of the population it served (*e.g.*, a population at the extreme end of geographic distribution), or if it serves another important role (*e.g.*, obligate area for migration to upstream spawning areas).

The physical or biological features of freshwater spawning and incubation sites, include water flow, quality and temperature conditions and suitable substrate for spawning and incubation, as well as migratory access for adults and juveniles (Tables 18 and 19). These features are essential to conservation because without them the species cannot successfully spawn and produce offspring. The physical or biological features of freshwater migration corridors associated with spawning and incubation sites include water flow, quality and temperature conditions supporting larval and adult mobility, abundant prey items supporting larval feeding after yolk sac depletion, and free passage (no obstructions) for adults and juveniles. These features are essential to conservation because they allow adult fish to swim upstream to reach spawning areas and they allow larval fish to proceed downstream and reach the ocean.

As noted previously, the designations of critical habitat for species used the terms primary constituent element or essential features. The new critical habitat regulations (81 FR 7414) replace this term with physical or biological features (PBFs). The shift in terminology does not change the approach used in conducting a ''destruction or adverse modification'' analysis, which is the same regardless of whether the original designation identified primary constituent elements, physical or biological features, or essential features. In this biological opinion, we use the term PBF to mean PCE or essential feature, as appropriate for the specific critical habitat

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the conservation of the population through demonstrated or potential productivity of the area" (NOAA Fisheries 2005).

Table 18. The physical or biological features (formerly primary constituent elements (PCEs)) of critical habitats designated for UCR Chinook and Steelhead, MCR Steelhead, and SR steelhead, and corresponding species life history events.

Physical or Biological Features		**Species Life History Event**
Site Type	**Site Attribute**	
Freshwater spawning	Substrate Water quality Water quantity	Adult spawning Embryo incubation Alevin growth and development
Freshwater rearing	Floodplain connectivity Forage Natural cover Water quality Water quantity	Fry emergence from gravel Fry/parr/smolt growth and development
Freshwater migration	Free of artificial obstruction Natural cover Water quality Water quantity	Adult sexual maturation Adult upstream migration and holding Kelt (steelhead) seaward migration Fry/parr/smolt growth, development, and seaward migration
Estuarine areas	Forage Free of artificial obstruction Natural cover Salinity Water quality Water quantity	Adult sexual maturation and "reverse smoltification" Adult upstream migration and holding Kelt (steelhead) seaward migration Fry/parr/smolt growth, development, and seaward migration
Nearshore marine areas	Forage Free of artificial obstruction Natural cover Water quantity Water quality	Adult growth and sexual maturation Adult spawning migration Nearshore juvenile rearing

Table 19. Essential features of critical habitats designated for SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, SR fall-run Chinook salmon, and SR sockeye salmon, and corresponding species life history events.

Physical or Biological Features		**Species Life History Event**
Site	**Site Attribute**	
Spawning and juvenile rearing areas	Access (sockeye) Cover/shelter Food (juvenile rearing) Riparian vegetation Space (Chinook, coho) Spawning gravel Water quality Water temp (sockeye) Water quantity	Adult spawning Embryo incubation Alevin growth and development Fry emergence from gravel Fry/parr/smolt growth and development
Adult and juvenile migration corridors	Cover/shelter Food (juvenile) Riparian vegetation Safe passage Space Substrate Water quality Water quantity Water temperature Water velocity	Adult sexual maturation Adult upstream migration and holding Kelt (steelhead) seaward migration Fry/parr/smolt growth, development, and seaward migration
Areas for growth and development to adulthood	Ocean areas – not identified	Nearshore juvenile rearing Subadult rearing Adult growth and sexual maturation Adult spawning migration

CHART Salmon and Steelhead Critical Habitat Assessments

The CHART for each recovery domain assessed biological information pertaining to occupied by listed salmon and steelhead, determine whether those areas contained PBFs (formerly PCEs) essential for the conservation of those species and whether unoccupied areas existed within the historical range of the listed salmon and steelhead that are also essential for conservation. The CHARTs assigned a 0 to 3 point score for the PBFs in each HUC_5 watershed for:

Factor 1. Quantity,
Factor 2. Quality – Current Condition,
Factor 3. Quality – Potential Condition,
Factor 4. Support of Rarity Importance,
Factor 5. Support of Abundant Populations, and

Factor 6. Support of Spawning/Rearing.

Thus, the quality of habitat in a given watershed was characterized by the scores for Factor 2 (quality – current condition), which considers the existing condition of the quality of PBFs in the HUC_5 watershed; and Factor 3 (quality – potential condition), which considers the likelihood of achieving PBF potential in the HUC_5 watershed, either naturally or through active conservation/restoration, given known limiting factors, likely biophysical responses, and feasibility.

When critical habitat was designated throughout the interior Columbia (IC) River recovery domain, it included the Snake River Basin, for SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, SR fall-run Chinook salmon, UCR spring-run Chinook salmon, SR sockeye salmon, MCR steelhead, UCR steelhead, and SRB steelhead. Major tributaries in the Oregon portion of the IC recovery domain include the Deschutes, John Day, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Grande Ronde, and Imnaha rivers.

Habitat quality in tributary streams in the IC recovery domain varies from excellent in wilderness and roadless areas to poor in areas subject to heavy agricultural and urban development (Wissmar *et al.* 1994; NMFS 2009b). Critical habitat throughout much of the IC recovery domain has been degraded by intense agriculture, alteration of stream morphology (*i.e.*, channel modifications and diking), riparian vegetation disturbance, wetland draining and conversion, livestock grazing, dredging, road construction and maintenance, logging, mining, and urbanization. Reduced summer stream flows, impaired water quality, and reduced habitat complexity are common problems for critical habitat in developed areas.

Migratory habitat quality in this area has been severely affected by the development and operation of the FCRPS dams and reservoirs in the mainstem Columbia River, Bureau of Reclamation tributary projects, and privately owned dams in the Snake and Upper Columbia River basins. For example, construction of Hells Canyon Dam eliminated access to several likely production areas in Oregon and Idaho, including the Burnt, Powder, Weiser, Payette, Malheur, Owyhee, and Boise river basins (Good *et al.* 2005), and Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams completely block anadromous fish passage on the upper mainstem Columbia River.

Hydroelectric development modified natural flow regimes, resulting in higher water temperatures, changes in fish community structure leading to increased rates of piscivorous and avian predation on juvenile salmon and steelhead, and delayed migration for both adult and juveniles. Physical features of dams such as turbines also kill migrating fish. In-river survival is inversely related to the number of hydropower projects encountered by emigrating juveniles. Similarly, development and operation of extensive irrigation systems and dams for water withdrawal and storage in tributaries have altered hydrological cycles.

A series of large regulating dams on the middle and upper Deschutes River affect flow and block access to upstream habitat, and have extirpated one or more populations from the Cascades Eastern Slope major population. Also, operation and maintenance of large water reclamation systems such as the Umatilla Basin and Yakima Projects have significantly modified flow regimes and degraded water quality and physical habitat in this domain.

Many stream reaches designated as critical habitat in the IC recovery domain are over-allocated, with more allocated water rights than existing streamflow. Withdrawal of water, particularly during low-flow periods that commonly overlap with agricultural withdrawals, often increases summer stream temperatures, blocks fish migration, strands fish, and alters sediment transport (Spence *et al.* 1996). Reduced tributary stream flow has been identified as a major limiting factor for all listed salmon and steelhead species in this recovery domain except SR fall-run Chinook salmon and SR sockeye salmon (NMFS 2011e).

Many stream reaches designated as critical habitat are listed on the state of Oregon's Clean Water Act section 303(d) list for water temperature. Many areas that were historically suitable rearing and spawning habitat are now unsuitable due to high summer stream temperatures. Removal of riparian vegetation, alteration of natural stream morphology, and withdrawal of water all contribute to elevated stream temperatures. Contaminants such as insecticides and herbicides from agricultural runoff and heavy metals from mine waste are common in some areas of critical habitat.

The IC recovery domain is a very large and diverse area. The CHART determined that few watersheds with PCEs (now PBFs) for Chinook salmon or steelhead are in good to excellent condition with no potential for improvement. Overall, most IC recovery domain watersheds are in fair-to-poor or fair-to-good condition. However, most of these watersheds have some or high potential for improvement. In Washington, the Upper Methow, Lost, White, and Chiwawa watersheds are in good-to-excellent condition with no potential for improvement. In Oregon, only the Lower Deschutes, Minam, Wenaha, and Upper and Lower Imnaha Rivers HUC_5 watersheds are in good-to-excellent condition with no potential for improvement. In Idaho, a number of watersheds with PCEs for steelhead (Upper Middle Salmon, Upper Salmon/Pahsimeroi, Middle Fork Salmon, Little Salmon, Selway, and Lochsa rivers) are in good-to-excellent condition with no potential for improvement. Additionally, several Lower Snake River HUC_5watersheds in the Hells Canyon area, straddling Oregon and Idaho, are in good-to-excellent condition with little to no potential for improvement (Table 20).

Table 20. **Interior Columbia Recovery Domain:** Current and potential quality of HUC_5 watersheds identified as supporting historically independent populations of ESA-listed Chinook salmon (CK) and steelhead (ST) (NOAA Fisheries 2005). Watersheds are ranked primarily by "current quality" and secondly by their "potential for restoration."

Current PBF Condition	Potential PBF Condition
3 = good to excellent	3 = highly functioning, at historical potential
2 = fair to good	2 = high potential for improvement
1 = fair to poor	1 = some potential for improvement
0 = poor	0 = little or no potential for improvement

Watershed Name and HUC_5 Code(s)	Listed Species	Current Quality	Restoration Potential
Upper Columbia # 1702000xxx			
White (101), Chiwawa (102), Lost (801) & Upper Methow (802) rivers	CK/ST	3	3
Upper Chewuch (803) & Twisp rivers (805)	CK/ST	3	2
Lower Chewuch River (804); Middle (806) & Lower (807) Methow rivers	CK/ST	2	2
Salmon Creek (603) & Okanogan River/Omak Creek (604)	ST	2	2
Upper Columbia/Swamp Creek (505)	CK/ST	2	1
Foster Creek (503) & Jordan/Tumwater (504)	CK/ST	1	1
Upper (601) & Lower (602) Okanogan River; Okanogan River/Bonaparte Creek (605); Lower Similkameen River (704); & Lower Lake Chelan (903)	ST	1	1
Unoccupied habitat in Sinlahekin Creek (703)	ST Conservation Value "Possibly High"		
Upper Columbia #1702001xxx			
Entiat River (001); Nason/Tumwater (103); & Lower Wenatchee River (105)	CK/ST	2	2
Lake Entiat (002)	CK/ST	2	1
Columbia River/Lynch Coulee (003); Sand Hollow (004); Yakima/Hansen Creek (604), Middle Columbia/Priest Rapids (605), & Columbia River/Zintel Canyon (606)	ST	2	1
Icicle/Chumstick (104)	CK/ST	1	2
Lower Crab Creek (509)	ST	1	2
Rattlesnake Creek (204)	ST	0	1
Yakima #1703000xxx			
Upper (101) & Middle (102) Yakima rivers; Teanaway (103) & Little Naches (201) rivers; Naches River/Rattlesnake Creek (202); & Ahtanum (301) & Upper Toppenish (303) & Satus (305) creeks	ST	2	2
Umtanum/Wenas (104); Naches River/Tieton River (203); Upper Lower Yakima River (302); & Lower Toppenish Creek (304)	ST	1	2
Yakima River/Spring Creek (306)	ST	1	1
Lower Snake River #1706010xxx			

Current PBF Condition	Potential PBF Condition
3 = good to excellent	3 = highly functioning, at historical potential
2 = fair to good	2 = high potential for improvement
1 = fair to poor	1 = some potential for improvement
0 = poor	0 = little or no potential for improvement

Watershed Name and HUC5 Code(s)	Listed Species	Current Quality	Restoration Potential
Snake River/Granite (101), Getta (102), & Divide (104) creeks; Upper (201) & Lower (205) Imnaha River; Snake River/Rogersburg (301); Minam (505) & Wenaha (603) rivers	ST	3	3
Grande Ronde River/Rondowa (601)	ST	3	2
Big (203) & Little (204) Sheep creeks; Asotin River (302); Catherine Creek (405); Lostine River (502); Bear Creek (504); & Upper (706) & Lower (707) Tucannon River	ST	2	3
Middle Imnaha River (202); Snake River/Captain John Creek (303); Upper Grande Ronde River (401); Meadow (402); Beaver (403); Indian (409), Lookingglass (410) & Cabin (411) creeks; Lower Wallowa River (506); Mud (602), Chesnimnus (604) & Upper Joseph (605) creeks	ST	2	2
Ladd Creek (406); Phillips/Willow Creek (408); Upper (501) & Middle (503) Wallowa rivers; & Lower Grande Ronde River/Menatche Creek (607)	ST	1	3
Five Points (404); Lower Joseph (606) & Deadman (703) creeks	ST	1	2
Tucannon/Alpowa Creek (701)	ST	1	1
Mill Creek (407)	ST	0	3
Pataha Creek (705)	ST	0	2
Snake River/Steptoe Canyon (702) & Penawawa Creek (708)	ST	0	1
Flat Creek (704) & Lower Palouse River (808)	ST	0	0
Upper Salmon and Pahsimeroi #1706020xxx			
Germania (111) & Warm Springs (114) creeks; Lower Pahsimeroi River (201); Alturas Lake (120), Redfish Lake (121), Upper Valley (123) & West Fork Yankee (126) creeks	ST	3	3
Basin Creek (124)	ST	3	2
Salmon River/Challis (101); East Fork Salmon River/McDonald Creek (105); Herd Creek (108); Upper East Fork Salmon River (110); Salmon River/Big Casino (115), Fisher (117) & Fourth of July (118) creeks; Upper Salmon River (119); Valley Creek/Iron Creek (122); & Morgan Creek (132)	ST	2	3
Salmon River/Bayhorse Creek (104); Salmon River/Slate Creek (113); Upper Yankee Fork (127) & Squaw Creek (128); Pahsimeroi River/Falls Creek (202)	ST	2	2
Yankee Fork/Jordan Creek (125)	ST	1	3
Salmon River/Kinnikinnick Creek (112); Garden Creek (129); Challis Creek/Mill Creek (130); & Patterson Creek (203)	ST	1	2
Road Creek (107)	ST	1	1
Unoccupied habitat in Hawley (410), Eighteenmile (411) & Big Timber (413) creeks	Conservation Value for ST “Possibly High”		

Current PBF Condition	Potential PBF Condition
3 = good to excellent	3 = highly functioning, at historical potential
2 = fair to good	2 = high potential for improvement
1 = fair to poor	1 = some potential for improvement
0 = poor	0 = little or no potential for improvement

Watershed Name and HUC_5 Code(s)	Listed Species	Current Quality	Restoration Potential
Middle Salmon, Panther and Lemhi #1706020xxx			
Salmon River/Colson (301), Pine (303) & Moose (305) creeks; Indian (304) & Carmen (308) creeks, North Fork Salmon River (306); & Texas Creek (412)	ST	3	3
Deep Creek (318)	ST	3	2
Salmon River/Cow Creek (312) & Hat (313), Iron (314), Upper Panther (315), Moyer (316) & Woodtick (317) creeks; Lemhi River/Whimpey Creek (402); Hayden (414), Big Eight Mile (408), & Canyon (408) creeks	ST	2	3
Salmon River/Tower (307) & Twelvemile (311) creeks; Lemhi River/Kenney Creek (403); Lemhi River/McDevitt (405), Lemhi River/Yearian Creek (406); & Peterson Creek (407)	ST	2	2
Owl (302) & Napias (319) creeks	ST	2	1
Salmon River/Jesse Creek (309); Panther Creek/Trail Creek (322); & Lemhi River/Bohannon Creek (401)	ST	1	3
Salmon River/Williams Creek (310)	ST	1	2
Agency Creek (404)	ST	1	1
Panther Creek/Spring Creek (320) & Clear Creek (323)	ST	0	3
Big Deer Creek (321)	ST	0	1
Mid-Salmon-Chamberlain, South Fork, Lower, and Middle Fork Salmon #1706020xxx			
Lower (501), Upper (503) & Little (504) Loon creeks; Warm Springs (502); Rapid River (505); Middle Fork Salmon River/Soldier (507) & Lower Marble Creek (513); & Sulphur (509), Pistol (510), Indian (511) & Upper Marble (512) creeks; Lower Middle Fork Salmon River (601); Wilson (602), Upper Camas (604), Rush (610), Monumental (611), Beaver (614), Big Ramey (615) & Lower Big (617) creeks; Middle Fork Salmon River/Brush (603) & Sheep (609) creeks; Big Creek/Little Marble (612); Crooked (616), Sheep (704), Bargamin (709), Sabe (711), Horse (714), Cottonwood (716) & Upper Chamberlain Creek (718); Salmon River/Hot Springs (712); Salmon River/Kitchen Creek (715); Lower Chamberlain/McCalla Creek (717); & Slate Creek (911)	ST	3	3
Marsh (506); Bear Valley (508) Yellow Jacket (604); West Fork Camas (607) & Lower Camas (608) creeks; & Salmon River/Disappointment Creek (713) & White Bird Creek (908)	ST	2	3
Upper Big Creek (613); Salmon River/Fall (701), California (703), Trout (708), Crooked (705) & Warren (719) creeks; Lower South Fork Salmon River (801); South Fork Salmon River/Cabin (809), Blackmare (810) & Fitsum (812) creeks; Lower Johnson Creek (805); & Lower (813), Middle (814) & Upper Secesh (815) rivers; Salmon	ST	2	2

Current PBF Condition	Potential PBF Condition
3 = good to excellent	3 = highly functioning, at historical potential
2 = fair to good	2 = high potential for improvement
1 = fair to poor	1 = some potential for improvement
0 = poor	0 = little or no potential for improvement

Watershed Name and HUC5 Code(s)	Listed Species	Current Quality	Restoration Potential
River/China (901), Cottonwood (904), McKenzie (909), John Day (912) & Lake (913) creeks; Eagle (902), Deer (903), Skookumchuck (910), French (915) & Partridge (916) creeks			
Wind River (702), Salmon River/Rabbit (706) & Rattlesnake (710) creeks; & Big Mallard Creek (707); Burnt Log (806), Upper Johnson (807) & Buckhorn (811) creeks; Salmon River/Deep (905), Hammer (907) & Van (914) creeks	ST	2	1
Silver Creek (605)	ST	1	3
Lower (803) & Upper (804) East Fork South Fork Salmon River; Rock (906) & Rice (917) creeks	ST	1	2
Little Salmon #176021xxx			
Rapid River (005)	ST	3	3
Hazard Creek (003	ST	3	2
Boulder Creek (004)	ST	2	3
Lower Little Salmon River (001) & Little Salmon River/Hard Creek (002)	ST	2	2
Selway, Lochsa and Clearwater #1706030xxx			
Selway River/Pettibone (101) & Gardner (103) creeks; Bear (102), White Cap (104), Indian (105), Burnt Knob (107), Running (108) & Goat (109) creeks; & Upper Selway River (106); Gedney (202), Upper Three Links (204), Rhoda (205), North Fork Moose (207), Upper East Fork Moose (209) & Martin (210) creeks; Upper (211), Middle (212) & Lower Meadow (213) creeks; Selway River/Three Links Creek (203); & East Fork Moose Creek/Trout Creek (208); Fish (302), Storm (309), Warm Springs (311), Fish Lake (312), Boulder (313) & Old Man (314) creeks; Lochsa River/Stanley (303) & Squaw (304) creeks; Lower Crooked (305), Upper Crooked (306) & Brushy (307) forks; Lower (308), Upper (310) White Sands, Ten Mile (509) & John's (510) creeks	ST	3	3
Selway River/Goddard Creek (201); O'Hara Creek (214) Newsome (505) creeks; American (506), Red (507) & Crooked (508) rivers	ST	2	3
Lower Lochsa River (301); Middle Fork Clearwater River/Maggie Creek (401); South Fork Clearwater River/Meadow (502) & Leggett creeks; Mill (511), Big Bear (604), Upper Big Bear (605), Musselshell (617), Eldorado (619) & Mission (629) creeks, Potlatch River/Pine Creek (606); & Upper Potlatch River (607); Lower (615), Middle (616) & Upper (618) Lolo creeks	ST	2	2
South Fork Clearwater River/Peasley Creek (502)	ST	2	1
Upper Orofino Creek (613)	ST	2	0
Clear Creek (402)	ST	1	3

Current PBF Condition	Potential PBF Condition
3 = good to excellent	3 = highly functioning, at historical potential
2 = fair to good	2 = high potential for improvement
1 = fair to poor	1 = some potential for improvement
0 = poor	0 = little or no potential for improvement

Watershed Name and HUC_5 Code(s)	Listed Species	Current Quality	Restoration Potential
Three Mile (512), Cottonwood (513), Big Canyon (610), Little Canyon (611) & Jim Ford (614) creeks; Potlatch River/Middle Potlatch Creek (603); Clearwater River/Bedrock (608), Jack's (609) Lower Lawyer (623), Middle Lawyer (624), Cottonwood (627) & Upper Lapwai (628) creeks; & Upper (630) & Lower (631) Sweetwater creeks	ST	1	2
Lower Clearwater River (601) & Clearwater River/Lower Potlatch River (602), Fivemile Creek (620), Sixmile Creek (621) and Tom Taha (622) creeks	ST	1	1
Mid-Columbia #1707010xxx			
Wood Gulch (112); Rock Creek (113); Upper Walla Walla (201), Upper Touchet (203), & Upper Umatilla (301) rivers; Meacham (302) & Birch (306) creeks; Upper (601) & Middle (602) Klickitat River	ST	2	2
Glade (105) & Mill (202) creeks; Lower Klickitat River (604); Mosier Creek (505); White Salmon River (509); Middle Columbia/Grays Creek (512)	ST	2	1
Little White Salmon River (510)	ST	2	0
Middle Touchet River (204); McKay Creek (305); Little Klickitat River (603); Fifteenmile (502) & Fivemile (503) creeks	ST	1	2
Alder (110) & Pine (111) creeks; Lower Touchet River (207), Cottonwood (208), Pine (209) & Dry (210) creeks; Lower Walla Walla River (211); Umatilla River/Mission Creek (303) Wildhorse Creek (304); Umatilla River/Alkali Canyon (307); Lower Butter Creek (310); Upper Middle Columbia/Hood (501); Middle Columbia/Mill Creek (504)	ST	1	1
Stage Gulch (308) & Lower Umatilla River (313)	ST	0	1
John Day #170702xxx			
Middle (103) & Lower (105) South Fork John Day rivers; Murderers (104) & Canyon (107) creeks; Upper John Day (106) & Upper North Fork John Day (201) rivers; & Desolation Creek (204)	ST	2	2
North Fork John Day/Big Creek (203); Cottonwood Creek (209) & Lower NF John Day River (210)	ST	2	1
Strawberry (108), Beech (109), Laycock (110), Fields (111), Mountain (113) & Rock (114) creeks; Upper Middle John Day River (112); Granite (202) & Wall (208) creeks; Upper (205) & Lower (206) Camas creeks; North Fork John Day/Potamus Creek (207); Upper Middle Fork John Day River (301) & Camp (302), Big (303) & Long (304) creeks; Bridge (403) & Upper Rock (411) creeks; & Pine Hollow (407)	ST	1	2
John Day/Johnson Creek (115); Lower Middle Fork John Day River	ST	1	1

Current PBF Condition	Potential PBF Condition
3 = good to excellent	3 = highly functioning, at historical potential
2 = fair to good	2 = high potential for improvement
1 = fair to poor	1 = some potential for improvement
0 = poor	0 = little or no potential for improvement

Watershed Name and HUC5 Code(s)	Listed Species	Current Quality	Restoration Potential
(305); Lower John Day River/Kahler Creek (401), Service (402) & Muddy (404) creeks; Lower John Day River/Clarno (405); Butte (406), Thirtymile (408) & Lower Rock (412) creeks; Lower John Day River/Ferry (409) & Scott (410) canyons; & Lower John Day River/McDonald Ferry (414)			
Deschutes #1707030xxx			
Lower Deschutes River (612)	ST	3	3
Middle Deschutes River (607)	ST	3	2
Upper Deschutes River (603)	ST	2	1
Mill Creek (605) & Warm Springs River (606)	ST	2	1
Bakeoven (608) & Buck Hollow (611) creeks; Upper (701) & Lower (705) Trout Creek	ST	1	2
Beaver (605) & Antelope (702) creeks	ST	1	1
White River (610) & Mud Springs Creek (704)	ST	1	0
Unoccupied habitat in Deschutes River/McKenzie Canyon (107) & Haystack (311); Squaw Creek (108); Lower Metolius River (110), Headwaters Deschutes River (601)	ST Conservation Value “Possibly High”		

2.3 Action Area

"Action area" means all areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action (50 CFR 402.02). The action area for the proposed activities encompasses some research that would take place in widely distributed headwater sites in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, as well as some sites in the lower Columbia River and its estuary. As a result, some of the proposed activities are so wide-ranging that the action area for this opinion potentially includes a great deal of each listed species' freshwater ranges (including some streams that may be randomly chosen from year to year), thus we cannot describe the action area with a great deal of specificity. Nonetheless, where it is possible to narrow the area of a given permit's scope, the effects analysis (Section 2.4) takes that limited geographic scope into account when determining the proposed actions' impacts on the species and their critical habitat.

The action area is thus spread out a great deal across the landscape. It is also discontinuous. That is, there are large areas in between the various actions' locations where listed salmonids do exist, but where they would not be affected to any degree by any of the proposed activities. Also, there is one geographically distant outlier that must be included in the action area: that portion of the Puget Sound inhabited by southern resident killer whales. As noted earlier, the proposed actions could affect the killer whales' prey base (Chinook salmon) and so it is possible that some of the actions' effects could be felt as far as hundreds of miles away from where the actual activities would take place. Those effects are described in the Not Likely to Adversely Affect section (2.11).

In all cases, the proposed research activities would take place in individually very small sites. For example, the researchers might electrofish a few hundred feet of river, deploy a beach seine covering only a few hundred square feet of stream, or operate a screw trap in a few tens of square feet of habitat. All of the actions would take place in designated critical habitat.

2.4 Environmental Baseline

The "environmental baseline" includes the past and present impacts of all Federal, state, or private actions and other human activities in the action area, the anticipated impacts of all proposed Federal projects in the action area that have already undergone formal or early section 7 consultation, and the impact of state or private actions which are contemporaneous with the consultation in process (50 CFR 402.02). The environmental baseline for this opinion is therefore the result of the impacts that many activities (summarized below) have had on the various listed species' survival and recovery. It is also the result of the effects that climate change has had in the region (see Section 2.2.1 for discussion). Because the action area under consideration covers a large percentage the majority of the listed species' ranges (see Section 2.3), the effects of these past activities on the species themselves (i.e., on their abundance, productivity, etc.) are largely described in the species status sections that precede this section (see Section 2.2). That is, for some of the work being contemplated here, the impacts of activities in the action area are indistinguishable from those effects described in the previous section on the species' rangewide status. Thus, with respect to the species' habitat, the environmental baseline is the combination of these effects on the PBFs that are essential to the conservation of the species. However, in those instances where the action area can be narrowed for a more specific analysis, the baseline in those areas will be taken fully into account.

2.3.1 Summary for all Listed Species

Factors Limiting Recovery

The best scientific information presently available demonstrates that a multitude of factors, past, present, and some ongoing, have contributed to the decline of west coast salmonids. NMFS' status reviews, Technical Recovery Team publications, and recovery plans for the listed species considered in this opinion identify several factors that have caused them to decline, as well as those that prevent them from recovering (many of which are the same). These factors are generally associated with (a) habitat degradation caused by human development (including hydropower development); (b) recreational, commercial, and tribal salmonid harvest; and (c) hatchery practices. Table 21 is a summary of the major factors limiting recovery of the species considered in this opinion; more details can also be found in the individual discussions of the species' status.

Table 21. Major Factors Limiting Recovery. (Adapted from NOAA, NMFS, 2005 Report to Congress: Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund FY 2000-2004, Good et al. 2005, Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015)

Species	High Temp	Excess Sediment	Blocked Passage	Habitat Loss	Degraded Channels	Impaired Floodplain	Reduced Streamflow	Hatchery Impacts	Harvest-Related Effects	Hydropower Mortality
UCR Chinook	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•
UCR Steelhead	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•
MCR Steelhead	•	•	•		•		•			•
SR Spr/sum Chinook	•	•			•	•		•	•	•
SR Fall Chinook				•				•	•	•
SR Steelhead	•	•			•	•	•	•		•
SR Sockeye			•				•			•

For detailed information on how various factors have degraded PCEs in the Columbia River basin please see any of the following: NMFS 1991, NMFS 1997, NMFS 1998a, NMFS 2000a, NMFS 2002, NMFS 2003, NMFS 2000d, Good et al. 2005, Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015).

Research Effects

Although it has never been identified as a factor for decline or a threat preventing recovery, scientific research has the potential to affect the species' survival and recovery by killing listed salmonids. As of 2014, several dozen section 10(a)(1)(A) scientific research permits are in force in the Pacific Northwest that authorize lethal and non-lethal listed species take. In addition, NMFS has also re-authorized three state scientific research programs under ESA section 4(d) (for Oregon, Washington, and Idaho). The table below displays the total take NMFS has authorized for the ongoing research under ESA sections 4(d) and 10(a)(1)(A), as of December 31, 2016.

Table 22. Take Authorized for Research on Listed Species in 2016.

	Origin	*Adults Handled*	*Adults Killed*	*Juveniles Handled*	*Juveniles Killed*
UCR Chinook	Natural	618	15	25,966	677
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	297	7	2,467	82
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	414	12	11,274	281
UCR Steelhead	Natural	654	10	47,381	1,163
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	594	17	15,069	409
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	252	7	12,701	331
MCR Steelhead	Natural	4,151	38	17,6025	3,166
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	903	10	26,388	760
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	424	12	17,294	367
SR s/s Chinook	Natural	9,879	67	1,371,565	10,920
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	1,739	11	17,2263	1,842
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	3,753	11	112,983	1,020
SR Fall Chinook	Natural	213	3	2,660	99
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip214	214	4	1,654	53
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	200	2	483	11
SR Steelhead	Natural	16,616	162	466,490	4,919
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	12,331	130	68,764	790
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	11,780	113	77,938	865
SR Sockeye*	Natural	165	5	12,571	157
	Listed Hatchery	2	0	229	7

*The adult take for sockeye salmon represents both natural fish and adults generated by the captive broodstock program.

Actual take levels associated with these activities are almost certain to be a good deal lower than the permitted levels. There are two reasons for this. First, most researchers do not handle the full number of outmigrants (or adults) they are allowed. (Our research tracking system reveals that researchers, on average, end up taking only about 37% of the number of fish they request and kill about 15% of the numbers authorized.) Second, we purposefully inflate our mortality estimates for each proposed study to account for the effects of potential accidental deaths. Therefore very likely that far fewer fish—especially juveniles—would be killed under any given research project than the researchers are allotted.

2.5 Effects of the Action

Under the ESA, "effects of the action" means the direct and indirect effects of an action on the species or critical habitat, together with the effects of other activities that are interrelated or interdependent with that action, that will be added to the environmental baseline (50 CFR 402.02). Indirect effects are those that are caused by the proposed action and are later in time, but still are reasonably certain to occur.

2.5.1 Effects on Critical Habitat

Full descriptions of effects of the proposed activities are found in the next section. As a general rule, the activities would be (1) conducting electrofishing surveys; (2) capturing fish with angling gear (barbless artificial bait and flies), traps, and nets of various types; and (3) marking the captured fish with various types of tags and marks. All of these techniques are minimally intrusive in terms of their effect on habitat because they would involve very little, if any, disturbance of streambeds or adjacent riparian zones. Thus their habitat effects would in all cases be discountable or insignificant. None of the activities would measurably affect any habitat PBF listed earlier. Moreover, the proposed activities are all of short duration.

2.5.2 Effects on Listed Salmon and Steelhead

As noted above, the proposed research activities would have no measurable effects on the listed salmonids' habitat. The actions are therefore not likely to measurably affect any of the listed salmonid species considered here by reducing their habitat's ability to contribute to their survival and recovery.

The primary effect of the proposed research on the listed species would be in the form of capturing and handling the fish. Capturing, handling, and releasing fish generally leads to stress and other short-term, sub-lethal effects, but the fish do sometimes die from such treatment. The following subsections describe the types of activities being proposed. Each is described in terms broad enough to apply to all the relevant permits. The activities would be carried out by trained professionals using established protocols. The effects of the activities have been well documented and are discussed in detail below. No researcher would receive a permit unless the activities (e.g., electrofishing) incorporate NMFS' uniform, pre-established set of mitigation measures—described in Section 1.3 of this opinion as "Common Elements among the Proposed Actions." They are incorporated (where relevant) into every permit as part of the conditions to which any researcher must adhere.

Observation

For some parts of the proposed studies, listed fish would be observed in-water (e.g., by snorkel surveys or from the banks). Direct observation is the least disruptive method for determining a species' presence/absence and estimating their relative numbers. Its effects are also generally the shortest-lived and least harmful of the research activities discussed in this section because a cautious observer can effectively obtain data while only slightly disrupting the fishes' behavior. Fry and juveniles frightened by the turbulence and sound created by observers are likely to seek temporary refuge in deeper water or behind or under rocks or vegetation. In extreme cases, some individuals may leave a particular pool or habitat type and then return when observers leave the area. At times, the research involves observing adult fish—which are more sensitive to disturbance. During some of the research activities discussed below, redds may be visually inspected, but per NMFS' pre-established mitigation measures (Section 1.3), would not be walked on. Harassment is the primary form of take associated with these observation activities, and no injuries or deaths are expected to occur—particularly in cases where the researchers observe from the stream banks rather than in the water. Because these effects are so small, there is little a researcher can do to mitigate them except to avoid disturbing sediments, gravels, and, to the extent possible, the fish themselves, and allow any disturbed fish the time they need to reach cover.

Capture/handling

Any physical handling or psychological disturbance is known to be stressful to fish (Sharpe et al. 1998). The primary contributing factors to stress and death from handling are excessive doses of anesthetic, differences in water temperatures (between the river and wherever the fish are held), dissolved oxygen conditions, the amount of time that fish are held out of the water, and physical trauma. Stress on salmonids increases rapidly from handling if the water temperature exceeds 18ºC or dissolved oxygen is below saturation. Fish that are transferred to holding tanks can experience trauma if care is not taken in the transfer process, and fish can experience stress and injury from overcrowding in traps if the traps are not emptied regularly. High levels of stress can both immediately debilitate individuals and over a longer period, increase their vulnerability to physical and biological challenges (Sharpe et al. 1998). Debris built up at traps can also kill or injure fish unless the traps are monitored and cleared regularly. The permit conditions identified earlier in subsection 1.3 contain measures that mitigate these and other factors that commonly lead to stress and trauma from handling, and thus minimize the harmful effects. When these measures are followed, fish typically recover fairly rapidly from handling.

Screw trapping

Smolt, rotary screw (and other out-migration) traps, are generally used to obtain information on natural population abundance and productivity. On average, they achieve a sample efficiency of four to 20% of the emigrating population from a river or stream--depending on river size. Although under some conditions traps may achieve a higher efficiency for a relatively short period of time (NMFS 2003b). Based on years of sampling at hundreds of locations under hundreds of scientific research authorizations, we would expect the mortality rates for fish captured at rotary screw type traps to be one percent or less.

The trapping, capturing, or collecting and handling of juvenile fish using traps is likely to cause some stress on listed fish. However, fish typically recover rapidly from handling procedures. The primary factors that contribute to stress and mortality from handling are excessive doses of anesthetic, differences in water temperature, dissolved oxygen conditions, the amount of time that fish are held out of water, and physical trauma. Stress on salmonids increases rapidly from handling if the water temperature exceeds 64.4 degrees F (18 degrees C) or if dissolved oxygen is below saturation. Additionally, stress can occur if there are more than a few degrees difference in water temperature between the stream/river and the holding tank.

The potential for unexpected injuries or mortalities among listed fish is reduced in a number of ways. These can be found in the individual study protocols and in the permit conditions stated earlier. In general, screw traps are checked at least daily and usually fish are handled in the morning. This ensures that the water temperature is at its daily minimum when fish are handled. Also, fish may not be handled if the water temperature exceeds 69.8 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degrees C). Great care must be taken when transferring fish from the trap to holding areas and the most benign methods available are used—often this means using sanctuary nets when transferring fish to holding containers to avoid potential injuries. The investigators' hands must be wet before and during fish handling. Appropriate anesthetics must be used to calm fish subjected to collection of biological data. Captured fish must be allowed to fully recover before being released back into the stream and would be released only in slow water areas. And often, several other stringent criteria are applied on a case-by case basis: safety protocols vary by river velocity and trap placement, the number of times the traps are checked varies by water and air temperatures, the number of people working at a given site varies by the number of outmigrants expected, etc. All of these protocols and more are used to make sure the mortality rates stay at one percent or lower.

Angling

Fish that are caught with hook and line and released alive may still die as a result of injuries and stress they experience during capture and handling. The likelihood of killing a fish varies widely, based on a number of factors including the type of hook used (barbed vs barbless), the type of bait used (natural vs artificial), the water temperature, anatomical hooking location, the species, and the care with which the fish is released (level of air exposure and length of time for hook removal).

The available information assessing hook and release mortality of adult steelhead suggests that hook and release mortality with barbless hooks and artificial bait is low. Nelson et al (2005) reported an average mortality of 3.6% for adult steelhead that were captured using barbless hooks and radio tagged in the Chilliwack River, BC. The authors also note that there was likely some tag loss and the actual mortality might be lower. Hooton (1987) found catch and release mortality of adult winter steelhead to average 3.4% (127 mortalities of 3,715 steelhead caught) when using barbed and barbless hooks, bait, and artificial lures. Among 336 steelhead captured on various combinations of popular terminal gear in the Keogh River, the mortality of the combined sample was 5.1%. Natural bait had slightly higher mortality (5.6%) than did artificial lures (3.8%), and barbed hooks (7.3%) had higher mortality than barbless hooks (2.9%). Hooton (1987) concluded that catching and releasing adult steelhead was an effective mechanism for maintaining angling opportunity without negatively impacting stock recruitment. Reingold (1975) showed that adult steelhead hooked, played to exhaustion, and then released returned to their target spawning stream at the same rate as steelhead not hooked and played to exhaustion. Pettit (1977) found that egg viability of hatchery steelhead was not negatively affected by catch-and-release of pre-spawning adult female steelhead. Bruesewitz (1995) found, on average, fewer than 13% of harvested summer and winter steelhead in Washington streams were hooked in critical areas (tongue, esophagus, gills, eye). The highest percentage (17.8%) of critical area hookings occurred when using bait and treble hooks in winter steelhead fisheries.

The referenced studies were conducted when water temperatures were relatively cool, and primarily involve winter-run steelhead. Catch and release mortality of steelhead is likely to be higher if the activity occurs during warm water conditions. In a study conducted on the catch and release mortality of steelhead in a California river, Taylor and Barnhart (1999) reported over 80% of the observed mortalities occurred at stream temperatures greater than 21 degrees C. Catch and release mortality during periods of elevated water temperature are likely to result in post-release mortality rates greater than reported by Nelson et al (2005) or (Hooton (1987) because of warmer water and that fact that summer fish have an extended freshwater residence that makes them more likely to be caught. As a result, NOAA Fisheries expects steelhead hook and release mortality to be in the lower range discussed above.

Juvenile steelhead occupy many waters that are also occupied by resident trout species and it is not possible to visually separate juvenile steelhead from similarly-sized, stream-resident, rainbow trout.

Because juvenile steelhead and stream-resident rainbow trout are the same species, are similar in size, and have the same food habits and habitat preferences, it is reasonable to assume that catch-and-release mortality studies on stream-resident trout are similar for juvenile steelhead. Where angling for trout is permitted, catch-and-release fishing with prohibition of use of bait reduces juvenile steelhead mortality more than any other angling regulatory change. Artificial lures or flies tend to superficially hook fish, allowing expedited hook removal with minimal opportunity for damage to vital organs or tissue (Muoneke and Childress, 1994). Many studies have shown trout mortality to be higher when using bait than when angling with artificial lures and/or flies (Taylor and White 1992; Schill and Scarpella 1995; Muoneke and Childress 1994; Mongillo 1984; Wydoski 1977; Schisler and Bergersen 1996). Wydoski (1977) showed the average mortality of trout, when using bait, to be more than four times greater than the mortality associated with using artificial lures and flies. Taylor and White (1992) showed average mortality of trout to be 31.4% when using bait versus 4.9 and 3.8% for lures and flies, respectively. Schisler and Bergersen (1996) reported average mortality of trout caught on passively fished bait to be higher (32%) than mortality from actively fished bait (21%). Mortality of fish caught on artificial flies was only 3.9%. In the compendium of studies reviewed by Mongillo (1984), mortality of trout caught and released using artificial lures and single barbless hooks was often reported at less than 2%.

Most studies have found a notable difference in the mortality of fish associated with using barbed versus barbless hooks (Huhn and Arlinghuas 2011; Bartholomew and Bohnsack 2005; Taylor and White 1992; Mongillo 1984; Wydoski 1977). Researchers have generally concluded that barbless hooks result in less tissue damage, they are easier to remove, and because they are easier to remove the handling time is shorter. In summary, catch-and-release mortality of steelhead is generally lowest when researchers are restricted to use of artificial flies and lures. As a result, all steelhead sampling via angling must be carried out using barbless artificial flies and lures.

Only a few reports are available that provide empirical evidence showing what the catch and release mortality is for Chinook salmon in freshwater. The ODFW has conducted studies of hooking mortality incidental to the recreational fishery for Chinook salmon in the Willamette River. A study of the recreational fishery estimates a per-capture hook-and-release mortality for wild spring Chinook in Willamette River fisheries of 8.6% (Schroeder et al. 2000), which is similar to a mortality of 7.6% reported by Bendock and Alexandersdottir (1993) in the Kenai River, Alaska.

A second study on hooking mortality in the Willamette River, Oregon, involved a carefully controlled experimental fishery, and mortality was estimated at 12.2% (Lindsay et al. 2004). In hooking mortality studies, hooking location, gear type, and unhook time is important in determining the mortality of released fish. Fish hooked in the jaw or tongue suffered lower mortality (2.3 and 17.8% in Lindsay et al. (2004)) compared to fish hooked in the gills or esophagus (81.6 and 67.3%). Numerous studies have reported that deep hooking is more likely to result from using bait (e.g. eggs, prawns, or ghost shrimp) than lures (Lindsay et al 2004; …..). One theory is that bait tends to be passively fished and the fish is more likely to swallow bait than a lure. Passive angling techniques (e.g. drift fishing) are often associated with higher hooking mortality rates for salmon while active angling techniques (e.g. trolling) are often associated with lower hooking mortality rates (Rogers et al 1999).

Catch and release fishing does not seem to have an effect on migration. Lindsay et al. (2004) noted that "hooked fish were recaptured at various sites at about the same frequency as control fish". Bendock and Alex (1993) found that most of their tagged fish later turned up on the spawning grounds. Cowen et al (2007) found little evidence of an adverse effect on spawning success for Chinook.

Not all of the fish that are hooked are subsequently landed. We were unable to find any studies that measured the effect of hooking and losing a fish. However, it is reasonable to assume that nonlanded morality would be negligible, as fish lost off the hook are unlikely to be deeply hooked and would have little or no wound and bleeding (Cowen et al 2007).

Based on the available data, the *U.S. v. Oregon* Technical Advisory Committee has adopted a 10% rate in order to make conservative estimates of incidental mortality in fisheries (TAC 2008). Nonetheless, given the fact that no ESA section 10 permit or 4(d) authorization may "operate to the disadvantage of the species," we allow no more than a three percent mortality rate for any listed species collected via angling, and all such activities must employ barbless artificial lures and flies.

Electrofishing

Electrofishing is a process by which an electrical current is passed through water, stunning fish and thus making them easier to capture. It can cause a suite of effects ranging from simple harassment to actually killing the fish (adults and juveniles) in an area where it is occurring. The amount of unintentional mortality attributable to electrofishing may vary depending on the equipment used, the settings on the equipment, water conditions, and the expertise of the technician. Electrofishing can have severe effects on adult salmonids. Spinal injuries in adult salmonids from forced muscle contraction have been documented. Sharber and Carothers (1988) reported that electrofishing killed 50 percent of the adult rainbow trout in their study. The long-term effects electrofishing has on both juvenile and adult salmonids are not well understood, but long experience with electrofishing indicates that most impacts occur at the time of sampling and are of relatively short duration.

The effects electrofishing may have on the species in this opinion would be limited to the direct and indirect effects of exposure to an electric field, capture by netting, holding captured fish in aerated tanks, and the effects of handling associated with transferring the fish back to the river (see the previous subsection for more detail on capturing and handling effects). Most of the studies on the effects of electrofishing on fish have been conducted on adult fish greater than 300 mm in length (Dalbey et al.1996). The relatively few studies that have been conducted on juvenile salmonids indicate that spinal injury rates are substantially lower than they are for large fish. Smaller fish intercept a smaller head-to-tail electrical potential than larger fish (Sharber and Carothers 1988) and may therefore be subject to lower injury rates (e.g., Hollender and Carline 1994; Dalbey *et al.* 1996; Thompson *et al.* 1997). McMichael *et al.* (1998) found a 5.1% injury rate for juvenile MCR steelhead captured by electrofishing in the Yakima River subbasin. The incidence and severity of electrofishing damage is partly related to the type of equipment used and the waveform produced (Sharber and Carothers 1988, McMichael 1993, Dalbey *et al.* 1996, Dwyer and White 1997). Continuous direct current (DC) or low-frequency (#30 Hz) pulsed DC have been recommended for electrofishing (Snyder 1992 and 1995, Dalbey *et al.* 1996) because lower spinal injury rates, particularly in salmonids, occur with these waveforms (Fredenberg 1992, McMichael 1993, Sharber *et al.* 1994, Dalbey *et al.* 1996). Only a few recent studies have examined the long-term effects of electrofishing on salmonid survival and growth (Ainslie *et al.* 1998, Dalbey *et al.* 1996). These studies indicate that although some of the fish suffer spinal injury, few die as a result. However, severely injured fish grow at slower rates and sometimes they show no growth at all (Dalbey *et al.* 1996).

NMFS's electrofishing guidelines (NMFS 2000c) will be followed in all surveys employing electrofishing equipment. The guidelines require that field crews be trained in observing animals for signs of stress and shown how to adjust electrofishing equipment to minimize that stress. Electrofishing is used only when other survey methods are not feasible. All areas for stream and special needs surveys are visually searched for fish before electrofishing may begin. Electrofishing is not done in the vicinity of redds or spawning adults. All electrofishing equipment operators are trained by qualified personnel to be familiar with equipment handling, settings, maintenance, and safety. Operators work in pairs to increase both the number of fish that may be seen and the ability to identify individual fish without having to net them. Working in pairs also allows the researcher to net fish before they are subjected to higher electrical fields. Only DC or pulsed DC units will be used, and the equipment will be regularly maintained to ensure proper operating condition. Voltage, pulse width, and rate will be kept at minimal levels and water conductivity will be tested at the start of every electrofishing session so those minimal levels can be determined. When such low settings are used, shocked fish normally revive instantaneously. Fish requiring revivification will receive immediate, adequate care.

The preceding discussion focused on the effects of using a backpack unit for electrofishing and the ways those effects will be mitigated. It should be noted, however, that in larger streams and rivers electrofishing units are sometimes mounted on boats or rafts. These units often use more current than backpack electrofishing equipment because they need to cover larger (and deeper) areas and, as a result, can have a greater impact on fish. In addition, the environmental conditions in larger, more turbid streams can limit researchers' ability to minimize impacts on fish. That is, in areas of lower visibility it can be difficult for researchers to detect the presence of adults and thereby take steps to avoid them. Because of its greater potential to harm fish, and because NMFS has not published appropriate guidelines, boat electrofishing has not been given a general authorization under NMFS' ESA section 4(d) rules. In any case, all researchers intending to use boat electrofishing will use all means at their disposal to ensure that a minimum number of fish are harmed.

Tagging/marking

Techniques such as PIT-tagging (passive integrated transponder tagging), coded wire tagging, fin-clipping, and the use of radio transmitters are common to many scientific research efforts using listed species. All sampling, handling, and tagging procedures have an inherent potential to stress, injure, or even kill the marked fish. This section discusses each of the marking processes and its associated risks.

A PIT tag is an electronic device that relays signals to a radio receiver; it allows salmonids to be identified whenever they pass a location containing such a receiver (e.g., any of several dams) without researchers having to handle the fish again. The tag is inserted into the body cavity of the fish just in front of the pelvic girdle. The tagging procedure requires that the fish be captured and extensively handled; therefore any researchers engaged in such activities will follow the NMFS' pre-established mitigation measures (Section 1.3), as well as any permit-specific conditions, to ensure that the operations take place in the safest possible manner. In general, the tagging operations will take place where fish are taken from, recover in, and are released to cold water of high quality and in a carefully controlled, sanitary environment.

The PIT tags have very little effect on growth, mortality, or behavior. The few reported studies of PIT tags have shown no effect on growth or survival (Prentice *et al.* 1987, Jenkins and Smith 1990, Prentice *et al.* 1990). For example, in a study between the tailraces of Lower Granite and McNary Dams (225 km), Hockersmith *et al.* (2000) concluded that the performance of yearling Chinook salmon was not adversely affected by gastrically- or surgically implanted sham radio tags or PIT-tags. Additional studies have shown that growth rates among PIT-tagged Snake River juvenile fall Chinook salmon in 1992 (Rondorf and Miller 1994) were similar to growth rates for salmon that were not tagged (Conner *et al.* 2001). Prentice and Park (1984) also found that PIT-tagging did not substantially affect survival in juvenile salmonids.

Coded wire tags (CWTs) are made of magnetized, stainless-steel wire. They bear distinctive notches that can be coded for such data as species, brood year, hatchery of origin, and so forth (Nielsen 1992). The tags are intended to remain within the animal indefinitely, consequently making them ideal for long-term, population-level assessments of Pacific Northwest salmon. The tag is injected into the nasal cartilage of a salmon and therefore causes little direct tissue damage (Bergman et al. 1968, Bordner et al. 1990). The conditions under which CWTs may be inserted are similar to those required for applying PIT-tags.

A major advantage to using CWTs is the fact that they have a negligible effect on the biological condition or response of tagged salmon; however, if the tag is placed too deeply in the snout of a fish, it may kill the fish, reduce its growth, or damage olfactory tissue (Fletcher et al. 1987, Peltz and Miller 1990). This latter effect can create problems for species like salmon because they use olfactory clues to guide their spawning migrations (Morrison and Zajac 1987).

In order for researchers to be able to determine later (after the initial tagging) which fish possess CWTs, it is necessary to mark the fish externally—usually by clipping the adipose fin—when the CWT is implanted (see text below for information on fin clipping). One major disadvantage to recovering data from CWTs is that the fish must be killed in order for the tag to be removed. However, this does not generally increase the likelihood of mortality because researchers recover CWTs from salmon that have been taken during the course of commercial and recreational harvest (and are therefore already dead).

Another primary method for tagging fish is to implant them with radio tags. There are two main ways to accomplish this, with differing consequences. First, a tag can be inserted into a fish's stomach by pushing it past the esophagus with a plunger. Stomach insertion does not cause a wound and does not interfere with swimming. This technique is benign when salmon are in the portion of their spawning migrations during which they do not feed (Nielson 1992), but could interfere greatly with feeding and fitness in general if done before that time. In addition, for short-term studies, stomach tags allow faster post-tagging recovery and interfere less with normal behavior than do tags attached in other ways.

The second method for implanting radio tags is to place them within the body cavities of (usually juvenile) salmonids. These tags do not interfere with feeding or movement. However, the tagging procedure is difficult, requiring considerable experience and care (Nielson 1992). Because the tag is placed within the body cavity, it is possible to injure a fish's internal organs. Infections of the sutured incision and the body cavity itself are also possible, especially if the tag and incision are not treated with antibiotics (Chisholm and Hubert 1985, Mellas and Haynes 1985).

Fish with internal radio tags often die at higher rates than fish tagged by other means because radio tagging is a complicated and stressful process. Mortality is both acute (occurring during or soon after tagging) and delayed (occurring long after the fish have been released into the environment). Acute mortality is caused by trauma induced during capture, tagging, and release. It can be reduced by handling fish as gently as possible. Delayed mortality occurs if the tag or the tagging procedure harms the animal in direct or subtle ways. Tags may cause wounds that do not heal properly, may make swimming more difficult, or may make tagged animals more vulnerable to predation (Howe and Hoyt 1982, Matthews and Reavis 1990, Moring 1990). Tagging may also reduce fish growth by increasing the energetic costs of swimming and maintaining balance. As with the other forms of tagging and marking, researchers will keep the harm caused by radio tagging to a minimum by following the conditions given earlier in this opinion, as well as by meeting any other permit-specific requirements.

Fin clipping is the process of removing part or all of one or more fins to alter a fish's appearance and thus make it identifiable. When entire fins are removed, they are not expected grow back. Alternatively, a permanent mark can be made when only a part of the fin is removed or the end of a fin or a few fin rays are clipped. Although researchers have used all fins for marking at one time or another, the current preference is to clip the adipose, pelvic, or pectoral fins. Marks can also be made by punching holes or cutting notches in fins, severing individual fin rays (Welch and Mills 1981), or removing single prominent fin rays (Kohlhorst 1979). Many studies have examined the effects of fin clips on fish growth, survival, and behavior. The results of these studies are somewhat varied; however, it can be said that fin clips do not generally alter fish growth. Studies comparing the growth of clipped and unclipped fish generally have shown no differences between them (e.g., Brynildson and Brynildson 1967). Moreover, wounds caused by fin clipping usually heal quickly—especially those caused by partial clips.

Mortality among fin-clipped fish is also variable. Some immediate mortality may occur during the marking process, especially if fish have been handled extensively for other purposes (e.g., stomach sampling). Delayed mortality depends, at least in part, on fish size; small fishes have often been found to be susceptible to it and Coble (1967) suggested that fish shorter than 90 mm are at particular risk. The degree of mortality among individual fishes also depends on which fin is clipped. Stolte (1973) showed that adipose- and pelvic-fin-clipped coho salmon fingerlings have a 100% recovery rate. Recovery rates are generally higher for adipose- and pelvic-fin-clipped fish in comparison to those that are clipped on the pectoral, dorsal, and anal fins (Nicola and Cordone 1973). Clipping the adipose and pelvic fins probably kills fewer fish because these fins are not as important as other fins for movement or balance (McNeil and Crossman 1979). Mortality is generally higher when the major median and pectoral fins are clipped. Mears and Hatch (1976) showed that clipping more than one fin may increase delayed mortality, but other studies have been less conclusive.

Regardless, any time researchers clip or remove fins, it is necessary that the fish be handled. Therefore, the same safe and sanitary conditions required for tagging operations also apply to clipping activities.

2.5.3 Species-specific Effects of Each Permit

The analysis process described above hinges primarily on two sets of data. The first set is NMFS's estimate of how many juvenile fish from each of the species considered here outmigrate every year. Our Science Center produces these estimates every year and the numbers are largely drawn from activities that have received research permits and authorizations in the region for well over a decade. All the analyses relating to juvenile take in this section and the next use as their denominators the five-year average outmigration estimates in the table below (these same data are also presented in the various species' status sections).

Table 23. Recent Five-Year Average Projected Outmigrations for Columbia Basin Salmonids (Dey 2012; Zabel 2013; Zabel 2014; Zabel 2015, Zabel 2016).

ESU/DPS	Origin	Outmigration
UCR Chinook	Natural	521,802
UCR Chinook	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	507,920
UCR Chinook	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	592,379
UCR Steelhead	Natural	245,890
UCR Steelhead	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	631,207
UCR Steelhead	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	143,502
MCR Steelhead	Natural	448,242
MCR Steelhead	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	347,853
MCR Steelhead	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	202,573
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Natural	1,397,403
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	4,288,088
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	1,115,848
SR Fall Chinook	Natural	544,134
SR Fall Chinook	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	2,8129,19
SR Fall Chinook	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	3,161,673
SR Steelhead	Natural	890,596
SR Steelhead	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	3,370,663
SR Steelhead	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	833,108
SR Sockeye	Natural	18,300
SR Sockeye	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clipped	161,380

The second set of data is used to gauge the effects the proposed activities may have on adults. These data are derived from the most recent five-year averages of the return numbers found in the individual species status sections. The following table summarizes the most recent four-year adult return averages for which we have data.

Table 24. Recent Four-Year Adult Return Averages and the Percentages of their Natural Component for the Species Considered in this Opinion (see individual status sections for more detail).

ESU/Species	Recent Four-Year Average Return	Natural Fish Returns	Percent of the Return Made up of Natural Fish
UCR Chinook	9,075	3,170	35%
UCR Steelhead	19,179	4,410	23%
MCR Steelhead	18,782	17,232	91%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	28,596	23,449	82%
SR Fall Chinook	129,254	14,218	11%
SR Steelhead	333,400	33,340	10%
SR Sockeye	1,373		All part of a captive broodstock program.

In conducting the following analyses, we have tied the effects of each proposed action to its impacts on individual populations (or population groups) wherever it was possible to do so. In some instances, the nature of the project (i.e., it is broadly distributed or situated in mainstem habitat) was such that the take could not reliably be assigned to any population or group of populations. In those cases, the effects of the action are measured in terms of how they are expected to affect each species at the species scale, rather than at the population scale.

Permit 1175 – 9R

Under Permit 1175 – 9R, the GPNF would continue work they have been conducting for more than 10 years. The GPNF researchers would use backpack electrofishing equipment (single-pass), hook-and-line angling, and beach seines to capture juvenile MCR steelhead during the course of stream surveys on national forest and national monument lands. The fish would be captured, handled, allowed to recover, and released back to the sites of their capture. Once captured, the fish would be counted by broad size class (100mm) or year class and returned to the river within a few (5-10) minutes. No samples would be taken and no anesthesia would be used. The GPNF would also conduct spawner/redd count surveys that would not involve taking any fish.

The GPNF is requesting the following take amounts.

Table 25. Requested Juvenile MCR Steelhead take for Permit 1175 – 9R (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	50	2*

*In this and all other instances where unintentional mortality is listed, the numbers *come out* of the requested take they are not added to it. So for example, the two MCR steelhead juveniles in the Unintentional Mortality column in the table above would be two of the requested 50 fish found in the fifth column.

Because the nearly all the fish that would be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that the action is likely to kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23. This signifies that the research may kill a maximum of 0.0004% percent of the last five years' (average) projected outmigrations for natural MCR steelhead juveniles. At the DPS level, that impact would be nearly negligible in terms of its effects on abundance and productivity and not measureable with regard to any structure or diversity effects.

Still, that small percentage would be magnified by the fact that all the fish that may possibly be taken would only come from the portion of the DPS found in the White Salmon River or Wind River. Given, though, that MCR steelhead have only recently returned to the White Salmon River (see status section), the likelihood is that the GPNF researchers will not encounter any MCR steelhead at all. Nonetheless, the chance does remain, and the fact that the Condit Dam on the White Salmon River was recently removed increases that chance (it is hoped that with the dam removal, many more salmon and steelhead will return to the river). But even if enough steelhead were to return to the White Salmon and Wind Rivers to make up only one tenth of the total outmigration from the DPS (very unlikely), that would still mean that the proposed research would only kill 0.004% of the local population. Thus even in a very conservative scenario, the research would have only a very small local impact (nearly zero, in fact) on abundance and productivity, and no appreciable impact on structure or diversity.

In addition, the research is expected to generate information that would benefit the species. The research is designed to determine fish presence in areas where they have not been seen for decades, and so the research will increase our understanding of the effects associated with dam removal as well as generating baseline information to help forest managers design projects to be as protective of listed species as possible.

Permit 1339 – 4R

Under Permit 1339 – 4R, the NPT would continue and actually reduce research they have been performing for nearly two decades. The researchers would conduct their work in a number of tributary streams to the Imnaha, Grand Ronde, and Clearwater Rivers. They would also perform some work at the adult fish trap at Lower Granite Dam. They would observe, capture, and handle adult and juvenile salmon and steelhead as well as mark and tag them at temporary/portable picket and resistance board weirs and rotary screw traps. Many of the captured fish would also be sampled for biological information. Biological samples would include fin tissue and scale samples. Marks would include opercule punches, fin clips, dyes, and PIT, floy, and/or Tyvek disk tags. Adult steelhead carcasses would also be collected and sampled for tissues, scales, and biological information. This project does not intend to kill any of the fish being captured but a small number may die as an unintended result of the activities.

Adult salmon and steelhead would be observed during spawning ground surveys and snorkeling activities. They would also be collected using temporary/portable picket weirs, sampled for biological information, sampled for fin tissues and scales, marked with opercule punches, tagged with Tyvek disc tags, and released. Adult steelhead carcasses would also be sampled for biological information. The amount of take the NPT is requesting is laid out in the following table.

Table 26. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage, Origin, and Activity for Permit 1339 – 4R (C=Capture, H=Handle, T/M=Tag/mark, TS= Tissue Sample, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality*
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5,000	50
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	T/M/TS/R	5,000	50
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5,000	50
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	T/M/TS/R	5,000	50
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5,000	50
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	T/M/TS/R	5,000	50
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	200	2
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	C/H/R	200	2

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality*
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	200	2
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	500	5
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	200	2
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	C/H/R	200	2
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	200	2
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	15,000	150
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	T/M/TS/R	15,000	150
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	C/H/R	15,000	150
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	T/M/TS/R	5,500	55
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	15,000	150
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	T/M/TS/R	5,500	55
SR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	2,700	28
SR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	T/M/TS/R	2,750	34
SR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	C/H/R	950	11
SR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	T/M/TS/R	950	15
SR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	950	11
SR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	T/M/TS/R	1,200	17

Because the vast majority of the fish that would be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that the action is likely to kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to (a) the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in

Table 23, and (b) the total average returns over the last five years for which we have data (Table 24). This signifies that the research may kill the following percentages of the last five years' average projected outmigrations and the most recent five years' average returns for the relevant species.

Table 27. Percentage of the 2006-2010 Average Outmigration and Recent 5-year Adult Returns Likely to be Killed by Activities Conducted Under Permit 1339 – 4R.

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin*	% Mortalities
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	0.007%
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	0.009%
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.002%
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	0.008%
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery	0.08%
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	0.0009%
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	0.01%
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery	0.003%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.03%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Non-Ad-Clip	0.02%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.006%
SR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	0.18%
SR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery	0.02%

*Because adult returns are not broken out by whether the fish have had their adipose fins removed, the percentages above reflect the effect of the mortalities on the adult hatchery component of each species as a whole.

Thus the research would kill no more than a few fractions of a percent of either the juvenile outmigrants or returning adults for any species or component thereof. Because SR fall Chinook are considered to have only one population, the mortalities would affect that population just as displayed above and cannot be discerned to have variable effects on different components of the species. For SR spr/sum Chinook and steelhead, these effects *would* be magnified somewhat by the fact that, while they are spread out over a vast portion of all the species' ranges, the activities do not encompass the entire range of either species. Unfortunately, there are currently very few good data on steelhead abundance in the areas where the actions are proposed. (In fact, this research is designed, among other things, to fill that data gap.) The data for spr/sum Chinook are more complete, but not for all areas being considered.

In general, the activities would take place largely in the Imnaha, Grande Ronde, and Clearwater subbasins. For spr/sum Chinook, that means that the activities would have the chance to affect (conservatively) approximately 43% of the entire species' abundance (Ford et al., 2011). Thus the effects on spr/sum Chinook displayed above may be magnified by approximately a factor of two. Even doubled, though, to a maximum mortality of 0.18% of the hatchery- and natural origin adults in these populations, the impact remains very small and, as noted below, is likely to be even smaller. For SR steelhead, as noted, we have very few reliable abundance data. The data we do have (for Joseph Creek and the upper Grande Ronde River) show that the proposed research is likely to result in the loss of as much as 1% of the returning adults. However Joseph Creek is currently seeing returns that put it well above the ICTRT's viability criteria (double the productivity and four times the abundance (NWFSC 2015)), and the upper Grande Ronde is considered stable. Moreover, it is very likely that those effects are a good deal smaller than projected. That is, if the past may be used as an indicator, in the more than ten years the NPT has been performing this research, they have never taken the number of steelhead allotted in their permit. Over the past five years, their total steelhead take has averaged approximately 15% of the amount allotted, and the actual mortalities have been as low or lower. But even if all the fish were to be taken, this would still amount to only a very small impact on the species' abundance, a similarly small impact on their productivity, and no measureable effect on their spatial structure or diversity.

Therefore, while these are certainly negative effects, they are unlikely to compromise the viability of the individual populations—let alone any species as a whole. In addition, the information derived from the research is used to help fisheries managers determine if recovery actions are benefiting wild Snake River salmonid populations as expected and therefore would be used to guide future management actions in the three subbasins in which the work would take place. The research they are asking to perform (and have been performing for nearly two decades) is designed to fill critical data gaps in our knowledge of the species' status and has been deemed a priority in every relevant salmonid recovery forum in the region.

And finally, the amounts being requested are actually smaller in all cases than amounts that have previously been analyzed and permitted. The NPT is requesting to reduce their previously-approved take by take tens of thousands of juveniles and hundreds of adults (primarily steelhead). They are also similarly decreasing their mortality request by hundreds of juveniles and many tens of adults. This signifies that the take in the permit would, even under the most pessimistic scenario, have a good deal less impact than has been the case for a number of years.

Permit 1341 – 5R

Under Permit 1341 – 5R, the SBT would continue (without changing take amounts) work they have been conducting for 30 years in the upper Salmon River, Idaho. Permit 1341-4R currently authorizes the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to annually take SR sockeye salmon and SR spr/sum Chinook salmon while conducting research to estimate overwinter survival, downstream migration survival, and downstream migration timing to evaluate various release strategies and calculate smolt-to-adult return rates. Juvenile SR sockeye salmon and spr/sum Chinook salmon would continue to be collected at Pettit and Alturas Lakes, ID, using rotary screw traps and weirs. The fish would be sampled for biological information and released or PIT-tagged and released. In addition, to determine trap efficiencies, a portion of the juvenile SR sockeye salmon captured would be PIT-tagged, released upstream of the traps, captured at the traps a second time, inspected for the tag, and released.

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes are requesting the following levels of take:

Table 28. Requested Juvenile Take by Species, Origin, and Activity for Permit 1341 – 5R. (C=Capture, H=Handle, T=Tag, R=Release)

ESU/DPS	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5,400*	16
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5,600	112
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/T/R	1,400	28

*The majority (~3,500) of these fish would be at the fry stage of development.

Because the vast majority of the fish that would be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that the action is likely to kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species found in Table 23. This signifies that the research may kill, at most, approximately 0.001% of the SR spr/sum Chinook outmigration and 0.7% of the natural origin sockeye (i.e., the progeny of adult sockeye that were released to spawn in Pettit and Alturas lakes or smolts that developed from eyed-eggs outplanted or fry released into Pettit and Alturas lakes).

For the SR spr/sum Chinook, that effect would be magnified by the fact that the take would all be concentrated in a small portion of the species' range. While it is not known how many SR spr/sum Chinook are likely to outmigrate from the areas of Pettit and Alturas lakes, it is known that an average of approximately 400 adults have returned to the upper Salmon River mainstem over the last several years. Thus, the number of outmigrants is certainly many thousand at the least. The 16 juveniles that may die, then, constitute a very small portion of the local population and a negligible fraction of the ESU as a whole. Assuming 200 females with (conservatively) 2,500 eggs each, and an egg-to-smolt survival of 5%, the loss would be on the order of 0.06%. Such a loss in abundance (and therefore productivity) is unlikely to negatively affect population abundance or productivity. This is especially true in that most of the fish that may die would be in the fry life stage—a stage with many more individuals and a much higher natural mortality than the smolt stage.

The potential loss of 0.7% of the natural-origin sockeye outmigration from this ESU is not likely to negatively affect the ESU as a whole. It is true that that number could be magnified somewhat because it only comes from a portion of the ESA, but for context, in 2010 the IDFG estimated 18,000+ natural-origin smolts from Redfish Lake and another approximately 180,000 hatchery-origin smolts released at Redfish, Pettit, and Alturas lakes, Redfish Lake Creek, and in the upper Salmon River (Peterson et al. 2011). As a result, though smolts from Pettit and Alturas represent only part of the natural origin outmigrants from the ESU, the 0.7% loss would actually remain about the same if one only included fish from that area. The reason for this is that the numbers released are very nearly the same as the numbers estimated to outmigrate from the ESU as a whole (Table 23), and that is because the overall outmigrant estimates are made at lower Granite dam—hundreds of miles downstream from the lakes where the work would take place and therefore they (the Table estimates) take into account the natural mortality that would occur over that distance. And again, the majority of the take would be fry rather than smolts. Nonetheless, the 0.7% loss is still one to be viewed with caution. However, it is important to keep in mind the fact that that loss would be incurred by efforts specifically designed to help recover the species and, as such, must be viewed in that context. The sockeye salmon reintroduction programs to Pettit and Alturas Lakes are considered a critical step in the species' continued survival, and the research has for many years provided information on the relative success of the techniques used by those programs and guided their future implementation. In any case, researchers are unlikely to actually kill 140 juveniles in any given year. Over the past several years, the researchers have seen mortality levels ranging from zero, to approximately two-fifths of the allowed amount.

Permit 1386 – 9R

Under Permit 1386 – 9R, the WDOE would continue research they have been conducting for more than a decade. They would capture the juvenile fish (using nets, seines, angling, or boat and backpack electrofishing), separate them from the target resident species, and release them as swiftly as possible. Any adult fish they encounter would be avoided entirely or released immediately without handling.

The WDOE is requesting the following amounts of take.

Table 29. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage and Origin for Permit 1386 – 9R (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality
UCR Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	5	0
UCR Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	10	1
UCR Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5	0
UCR Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
UCR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	5	0
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	10	1
UCR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5	0
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
MCR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	5	0
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	10	1
MCR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5	0
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	5	0
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	10	1
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5	0
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	5	0
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	10	1
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5	0
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
SR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	5	0
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	10	1

SR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5	0
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1

Because nearly all the fish that may be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that action may kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23. Doing so generates the results displayed below in Table 30. It was not necessary to compare the adult take to the recent adult abundance numbers because none are expected to be killed during the course of the research.

Table 30. Percentage of the 2007-2011 Average Outmigration Likely to be Killed by Permit 1386 – 9R.

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	% Mortalities
UCR Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
UCR Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0002%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0004%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0001%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.00007%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00003%
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	0.0001%
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0003%

This signifies that the proposed research under Permit 1386 – 9R would kill no adults and, at most, 0.0004% of any component of any species' outmigration. Thus the percentages are in every case extremely small—nearly zero in all instances, in fact. Moreover, because the researchers are sampling all over the state and in the Columbia River, no population is likely to experience a disproportionate amount of even those small losses. Therefore the research is unlikely to have a lasting negative effect on any VSP parameter for the species being taken: the effects on abundance and productivity are negligible and the effects on spatial structure and diversity are unmeasurably small. Moreover the researchers, when operating under previous version of this permit, generally do not kill a single fish and almost always take far fewer than they are allotted. Moreover, these small losses would be offset to some extent by the fact that this research is designed to help managers study contaminant presence throughout the waters of Washington State—information that would be used to direct cleanup operations and generally benefit the state's fish and wildlife.

Permit 1465 – 4R

Under Permit 1465 – 4R, researchers from the IDFG would continue work they have been performing for well over than a decade. They would use backpack- and boat electrofishing equipment to capture the juvenile fish in various streams throughout much of Idaho (Salmon and Clearwater River basins) and the mainstem of the Snake River. The captured fish would be measured and immediately released. Carbon dioxide may be used as an anesthetic in some instances, but for the most part the fish would be handled as little as possible and swiftly released back to the water.

The researchers are requesting the following levels of take.

Table 31. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage, Origin, and Activity for Permit 1465 – 4R (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	400	4
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	100	2
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	100	1
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	100	2
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	800	8
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	100	2
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	50	1
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	100	1

Because the vast majority of all the fish that may be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that the action is likely to kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23. This signifies that the research may kill the following percentages of the last five years' average projected outmigrations for the relevant species.

Table 32. Percentage of the 2007-2011 Average Outmigration Likely to be Killed by Permit 1465 – 4R.

ESU/Species	**Life Stage**	Origin	**% Mortalities**
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0003%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	0.00004%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00007%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0009%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00005%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	0.005%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0006%

Because the research would take place different streams in the Clearwater and Salmon River subbasins from year to year (and the mainstem Snake River), it is difficult to narrow down the populations from which the juveniles would likely originate. For the sockeye, there is only one population, so the effect there would be for the listed unit as a whole. For the other species, the vast majority of their production takes place in the proposed action area, so the effect would largely be as displayed. But even if the areas to be sampled constituted only half of the areas that actually produce SR fall Chinook, spr/sum Chinook, and steelhead instead of the great majority (and thereby doubled the effective percentages given in the table above), the overall effects would still be vanishingly small—0.002% at most—and they would be seen only in slight reductions in the species' abundance and productivity. And even then, those small effects would still be offset to some degree by the fact that the research has for years been employed to monitor species health in Idaho (and that of their habitat) and that information is used to inform a variety of management decisions throughout the region.

I addition, there is the fact that over the last several years this permit has been in force, the researchers have never taken nor killed all the fish they were allotted. And given that the effects in all cases are already very nearly zero, it is certain that the proposed research would have nearly a negligible negative effects on any of the species considered.

Permit 1598 – 4R

Under the renewed Permit 1598 – 4R, the WDOT would continue to conduct snorkel surveys and capture (using seines, minnow traps, or backpack electrofishing), identify, and release listed fish. No adults would be captured. The current work identical to the work they have been conducting for the last five years. The research would take place throughout the State of Washington in different streams from year to year—depending on the WDOT's workload and the areas where projects are proposed. The NMFS electrofishing guidelines would be followed in all cases, sample sizes would be kept to a minimum, boat electrofishing would only be conducted at times and in locations where adults of listed species are not normally present, and if large numbers of juvenile salmonids are encountered, the researchers would cease operation and modify the location or timing of their sampling to reduce or eliminate encounters. The same would hold true if adults were to be encountered.

The researchers are requesting the following amounts of take.

Table 33. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage, Origin, and Activity for Permit 1598 – 4R (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requeste d Take	Unintention al Mortality
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	13	1
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	C/H/R	21	1
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	10	1
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	1
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	11	1
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	22	1
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5	1
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5	1
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1

SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	10	1
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	1
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5	0
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1

Because the vast majority of the fish that would be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that the action is likely to kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23. This signifies that the research may kill the following percentages of the last five years' average projected outmigrations for the relevant species.

Table 34. Percentage of the 2006-2010 Average Outmigration Likely to be Killed by Permit 1598 - 4R.

ESU/Species	**Life Stage**	Origin	**% Mortalities**
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	0.0002%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0004%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0001%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0003%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.00007%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00003%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0001%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	% Mortalities
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	0.0%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0006%

Because the researchers would kill, at most, one juvenile from each species, they would effectively have as close to zero impact as it is possible for them to have. Moreover, the research would take place throughout Washington State, so it is not possible to determine from where in the listed units the juveniles would originate and thus we cannot ascribe the impact to individual populations or to any group smaller than the entire listing units. As a result, the deaths of the juveniles must be placed in the contexts of the entire ESUs and DPSs, and the effect at those scales is vanishingly small. In no instance would the effect exceed the death of six ten-thousandths of a percent of the outmigration for any given species. Thus the research would have, at most, only a very small impact on abundance and productivity and no appreciable impact structure or diversity. And even losses that small would to some extent be offset by the information generated from the research, which would be used to guide WDOT maintenance projects so that they have the smallest possible impact on listed salmonids. Moreover, in the past, WDOT has generally never reported killing even one of the fish they were allotted, so the likelihood is that the probable effect of exercising this permit is even smaller than that displayed.

Permit 16069 – 2R

Under Permit 16069, the City of Portland would conduct yearly research that would include capturing, handling, and releasing fish from all species covered by this opinion. The work would be conducted in the Columbia Slough and the Columbia River mainstem and would employ backpack- and boat electrofishing equipment. All captured fish would be retained in aerated water long enough for them to recover and then would be released. In most cases, only juveniles would be affected, and in no case would adults be killed. The researchers would work in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency to monitor the health of watersheds under the City's jurisdiction and determine the effectiveness of habitat restoration projects. The NMFS electrofishing guidelines would be followed, sample sizes would be kept to a minimum, and boat electrofishing would only be conducted at times and in locations where adults of listed species are not normally present. And if large numbers of juvenile salmonids are encountered, the researchers would cease operation and modify the location or timing of their sampling to reduce or eliminate encounters. The same would hold true if adults were to be encountered.

The researchers are requesting the following amounts of take.

Table 35. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage, Origin, and Activity for Permit 16069 -2R (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requeste d Take	Unintention al Mortality
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	20	1
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	1
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	20	1
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	1
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	40	1
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	40	1
MCR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	3	0
MCR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	3	0
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	20	1
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	1
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	20	1
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	1
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	20	1
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	1
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	20	1
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	1

Because the vast majority of the fish that would be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that the action is likely to kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23. This signifies that the research may kill the following percentages of the last five years' average projected outmigrations for the relevant species. (It was not necessary to compare any take to the adult return numbers because no adults are expected to be killed.)

Table 36. Percentage of the 2006-2010 Average Outmigration Likely to be Killed by Permit 16069 – 2R.

ESU/Species	**Life Stage**	Origin	**% Mortalities**
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	0.0002%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0004%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0001%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0003%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.00007%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00003%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0001%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	0.005%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0006%

Because the research would take place in Columbia Slough and the lower mainstem Columbia River, it is not possible to determine from where in the listed units the juveniles would originate, and thus we cannot ascribe the impact to individual populations or to any group smaller than the entire listing units. As a result, the deaths of the juveniles must be placed in the contexts of the entire ESUs and DPSs, and the effect at those scales is vanishingly small. In no instance would the effect exceed the deaths of a few one-thousandths of a percent of the outmigration for any given species. Thus the research would have, at most, only a very small impact on abundance and productivity and no appreciable impact structure or diversity. In fact, the impact is as close to zero as it is possible for the researchers to get. And even losses that small would to some extent be offset by the information generated from the research, which would be used to help guide habitat restoration and protection efforts so that they may have the greatest positive impact on listed salmonids.

Permit 16446 – 2R

Under Permit 16446 – 2R, the CTUIR would continue and slightly expand upon work they have been performing in the Walla Walla River subbasin for over a decade under two previous permits (1365 and 16446). As noted in the proposed action, the researchers would use rotary screw traps and backpack electrofishing units to capture juvenile fish. At the screw traps, the fish would be identified, measured, weighed, tissue sampled, and implanted with PIT-Tags (if they do not already have tags). Fish captured via electrofishing would be handled, measured, allowed to recover, and released in a safe area. Some adult carcasses would also be sampled.

The researchers are seeking to capture, tag, and tissue-sample 8,000 natural MCR steelhead smolts. They would also capture, handle, and release a further 500 smolts. Of the total 8,500 fish that may be captured, a possible 170 may be killed as an unintended result of the research activities. The researchers do not anticipate capturing or killing any adult listed fish.

This signifies that the research may kill, at most, slightly less than 0.018% of the DPS's outmigration in a given year (Table 23). However, that effect would not be spread uniformly throughout the species' range; it would be concentrated in that portion of the species inhabiting the Walla Walla subbasin. It is not known how many fish outmigrate yearly from the Walla Walla River watershed, but given that recent returns have averaged approximately 838 fish (Ford et al., 2011) approximately half of which would be females, each producing something on the order of 2,500 eggs, the system would produce approximately 52,375 smolts if only five percent of the eggs survive to reach that development stage. That would mean that the research would kill, at most, 0.3% of the local outmigration. Thus the research would have a very small effect on the local populations' abundance (and therefore productivity), but no measureable effect on structure of diversity and it would have a negligible effect on the DPS as a whole. This is especially true when one considers that over the life of their previous permits, the researchers killed far fewer fish than they have requested. The current requested mortality rate is two percent. Over the life of this research, they have generally seen mortality rates of less than one percent—and in some years they did not even conduct the research. Thus the actual effect of the research is likely to be on the order of half of that stated (0.15% instead of 0.3%) at the local level and roughly 0.01% when placed in the context of the species as a whole. Moreover, the small losses contemplated in this research would be offset to some extent by the benefit to be derived: the data would be used to help develop a subbasinwide recovery strategy for the MCR steelhead. Also, the work contemplated here has been considered a priority in a number of regional salmon recovery forums.

Permit 16521 – 2R

Under Permit 16521 – 2R, the WDFW's primary activity would be to employ beach seines to capture, anesthetize (with MS-222), measure, and release juvenile fish in the Hanford reach of the Columbia River. Once captured, the fish would be held in a floating net pen until sampled. All fish would be identified to species and enumerated. Up to 100 individuals of each species they encounter would also have their lengths measured. All fish would be allowed to recover and then be released back to the river. As a secondary activity, the WDFW would also use backpack electrofishing equipment and hand nets to capture a few fish trapped in pools when the river level recedes, transport them back to the Columbia River, and release them. The sampling to assess juvenile fall Chinook abundance and length frequency distribution would generally begin when the fry emerge in early March and continue through mid- to late June, but the surveys and the rescue operations could come before or after that period if the researchers determine they need more information on the impacts operations at McNary Dam may be having on the (non-listed) Hanford reach Chinook.

The researchers are requesting the following amounts of take.

Table 37. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage, Origin, and Activity for Permit 16521 – 2R (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	55	1
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	C/H/R	55	1
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	15	1
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	15	1

Because the vast majority of the fish that would be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that the action is likely to kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23. This signifies that the research may kill the following percentages of the last five years' average projected outmigrations for the relevant species.

Table 38. Percentage of the 2006-2010 Average Outmigration Likely to be Killed by Permit 16521 – 2R.

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	% Mortalities
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	0.0002%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0004%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0001%

Because the research would take place in the mainstem Columbia River, it is not possible to determine from where in the listed units the juveniles would originate, and thus we cannot ascribe the impact to individual populations or to any group smaller than the entire listing units. As a result, the deaths of the juveniles must be placed in the contexts of the entire species, and the effect at those scales is vanishingly small—in fact, as close to zero as it is possible to get. In no instance would the effect exceed the deaths of a few ten-thousandths of a percent of the outmigration for any given species. Thus the research would have, at most, only nearly zero impact on either species' abundance or productivity and no appreciable impact their structure or diversity. And even losses that small would to some extent be offset by the information generated from the research, which would be used to evaluate and improve protections for listed and non-listed salmonids under the Hanford Reach Fall Chinook Protection Program Agreement.

Permit 16866 – 3R

Under Permit 16866, researchers from OSU would use seines and boat- and backpack electrofishing equipment to capture, handle (measure) and release a variety of adult and juvenile listed fish in the sloughs and mainstem habitat near the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers. In all cases, listed fish would be processed before any non-listed fish (to reduce handling time as much as possible) and adults would be avoided to the greatest extent possible. If any adults are encountered during electrofishing, the equipment would be turned off and the fish would be allowed to escape. The researchers are requesting the following amounts of take.

Table 39. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage and Origin for Permit 16866 – 3R (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality*
UCR Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	1	0
UCR Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	15	1
UCR Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	1	0
UCR Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	15	1
UCR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	1	0
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	15	1
UCR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	1	0
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	15	1
MCR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	1	0
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	15	1
MCR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	1	0
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	15	1
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	1	0
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	15	1
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	1	0
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	15	1
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	1	0
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	11	1
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	1	0
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	11	1
SR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	1	0
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	15	1
SR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	1	0
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	15	1

Because the vast majority of the fish that would be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that action may kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23. Doing so generates the results displayed below in Table 40. (It was not necessary to compare the adult take to the recent adult abundance numbers because none are expected to be killed during the course of the research.)

Table 40. Percentage of the 2007-2011 Average Outmigration Likely to be Killed by Permit 16866 – 3R.

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	% Mortalities
UCR Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
UCR Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0002%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0004%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0001%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0003%
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	0.00007%
SR Spr/Sum Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
SR Fall Chinook Salmon	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00003%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0001%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%

This signifies that the proposed research under Permit 16866 would kill no adults and, at most, 0.0004% of any component of any species' outmigration. Thus the percentages are in every case extremely small—as nearly zero as they can be, in fact. Moreover, because the researchers are sampling the entire outmigrating and returning runs, no population is likely to experience a disproportionate amount of even those small losses. Therefore the research is unlikely to have a lasting negative effect on any VSP parameter for the species being taken: the effects on abundance and productivity are as close to zero as it is possible to get, and the effects on spatial structure and diversity are negligible. And in any case, these losses would be offset to some extent by the fact that this research is designed to help managers study listed species status and rends in the Willamette subbasin—information that will be used to inform a wide variety of management decisions in the coming years.

Permit 18696 – 2M

Under Permit 18696 – 2M, the IPC would modify and expand upon work they have been conducting for three years in the mainstem Snake River. They currently use sinking style, small (5.1 cm stretch) multifilament mesh nets anchored to the bottom of Lower Granite Reservoir to fish for white sturgeon. The nets are deployed during the day and the sampling is conducted during the months of October and November in Lower Granite Reservoir between RM 138.5 (0.7 miles downstream from the confluence of the Clearwater River) downstream to RM 129.6 (1.3 miles downstream of Silcott Island). The new work would consist of D-ring net sampling between the Salmon River confluence (RM 188) and the town of Lewiston, ID (RM 140) and that work would take place in the summer months. At each sample location, the researchers would record the river km, date and time of effort, depth fished, bottom water temperatures and dissolved oxygen levels. By-catch would be identified by species, counted, and measured for total length before being returned to the river. The exception to this is that all listed salmonids would be released with as little handling as possible, although the IPC would record the approximate size of all listed fish as well as noting any marks on the fish. The D-ring nets being employed have a small chance of intercepting any salmonids, however, because any captured fish would spend some time in the net before they can be raised from the bottom of the river, there is a chance that they will not survive the encounter. As a result, the researcher will do everything in their power to both avoid listed salmonids and, when that is impossible, handle them only to the extent needed to get them back in the water.

The researchers are requesting to add the following amounts of take to their existing permit.

Table 41. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage, Origin, and Activity for Permit 18696 -2M (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality*
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	1	1
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Adult	Adipose-clipped	C/H/R	1	1
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	125	20
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	C/H/R	125	20
SR Fall Chinook	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	7	1

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality*
SR Fall Chinook	Adult	Adipose-clipped	C/H/R	8	2
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	125	20
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	C/H/R	129	20
SR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	8	2
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	103	21
SR Sockeye	Adult	Natural	C/H/R	1	0
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	8	1

Due to the nature of the proposed capture method, a good number of the fish that may be caught will be killed as a result. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23 and the total recent returns found in table 24. This signifies that the research may kill the following percentages of the outmigrants and adult returns.

Table 42. Percentage of the 2009-2013 Average Outmigration and Recent Five-Year Adult Return Average Likely to be Killed by Permit 18696 – 2M.

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	% Mortalities
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Adult	Natural	0.004%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Adult	Adipose-clipped	0.02%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.001%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	0.0005%
SR Fall Chinook	Adult	Natural	0.007%
SR Fall Chinook	Adult	Adipose-clipped	0.002%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.004%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	0.0007%
SR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	0.006%

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	% Mortalities
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.002%
SR Sockeye	Adult	Natural	0.0%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	0.005%

Thus the effect of the research on listed species would in only no case mean that more than a few thousandths of a percent of any component would be killed—and that case (adult, ad-clipped spr/sum Chinook) is two hundredths of a percent. In addition, because the research would take place in the mainstem Snake River, the losses cannot be ascribed to any population for any species—they must be viewed in the context of the listed units as individual wholes. As a result, though the research may in some instances have a very small impact on species abundance and productivity, it would in no measurable way impact structure or diversity for any species.

Moreover, the researchers would take a number of additional precautions with the aim of reducing impacts even further.

- First, half the work would take place in October and November, and thus it is timed so that it is very unlikely that any salmonids at all would be present in the action area.
- Second, the nets would be deployed on the reservoir and river bottom and extend no more than two meters up from it. Also, they would be perpendicular to, and within the thalweg. These deep main channel habitats are used only very infrequently by salmonids (if they are present at all), so this would further reduce the chance of catching any listed fish
- Third, the nets would be set only for short durations and monitored closely. This is also expected to reduce encounters with listed fish, but if any *are* encountered, the fish would not be handled if at all possible and the net would be cut if necessary to minimize any possible harm.
- Finally, the researchers would primarily use a scheme of adaptive sampling. This would have the effect of focusing on areas shown to produce juvenile white sturgeon in the catch and exclude areas where ESA salmonids may be encountered. In addition, adaptive sampling would rely on sampling habitats of high juvenile sturgeon use which would be determined by tracking individuals with implanted sonic transmitters. In the event that telemetered juvenile white sturgeon habits overlap with those where listed salmonids are captured, sampling effort will be relocated to new locations with the hope of preventing further encounters with listed salmonids.

The result of all this is that the researchers are very unlikely to encounter any listed salmonids at all, and are extremely unlikely to reach the numbers displayed above. In the last three years, they have taken only one fish (an adult adipose-clipped fall Chinook) and killed none.

Nonetheless, it is possible that they could have a maximum effect of the magnitude described above—but even in that instance, the effect would be very small and would be offset to some degree by the information on reservoir and fish community health the research is designed to generate.

Permit 20492

Under Permit 20492, the ODFW would use boat and backpack electrofishing equipment to conduct fish assessment and monitoring survey in many of the state's waterbodies. Much of the work proposed to be done under this permit has previously been conducted under another permit (1318—expired in 2016), but the researchers wanted to make several changes and so it was determined that issuing a new permit would be the best course of action. Some of the captured fish would be anesthetized, sampled for length and weight, allowed to recover from the anesthesia, and released. Most salmonids, though, would only be shocked and allowed to swim away, or be netted and released immediately. The ODFW does not intend to kill any of the fish being captured, but a small number may die as an unintended result of the activities.

The researchers would minimize take by using low pulse rate (30 pulses/s), a narrow pulse width (< 6 msec), and low peak voltage (500 V). They would use the hull of the aluminum boat as the cathode and two anode arrays with a total of 12 droppers which allows the use of lower voltages with reduced field strength in the vicinity of the electrodes. The NMFS electrofishing guidelines would be followed and trainers from Smith-Root, Inc. have consulted with project staff to recommend equipment adjustments to reduce salmonid mortalities. Further, sample sizes would be kept as small as possible and boat electrofishing would only be conducted at times and in locations where adults of listed species are not likely to be present. And if large numbers of juvenile salmonids are accidentally encountered, the researchers would cease operation and modify the location or timing of their sampling to reduce or eliminate encounters.

Table 43. Requested Take by ESU, Life Stage, Origin, and Activity for Permit 20492 (C=Capture, H=Handle, R=Release)

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	Take Activity	Requested Take	Unintentional Mortality
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5	0
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5	1
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5	1
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	30	2

MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	20	2
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5	1
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5	1
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	10	1
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	5	1
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	5	1
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	C/H/R	2	0
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	C/H/R	7	0

Because the vast majority of the fish that would be captured are expected to recover with no ill effects, the true effects of the proposed action are best seen in the context of the fish that the action is likely to kill. To determine the effect of these losses, it is necessary to compare them to the total outmigrant numbers expected for these species (and their components) found in Table 23. This signifies that the research may kill the following percentages of the last five years' average projected outmigrations for the relevant species.

Table 44. Percentage of the 2006-2010 Average Outmigration Likely to be Killed by Permit 20492.

ESU/Species	**Life Stage**	Origin	**% Mortalities**
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0%
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery Ad-Clip	0.0002%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0004%
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0001%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0003%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.00007%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%

ESU/Species	Life Stage	Origin	% Mortalities
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	0.0002%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00003%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	0.0001%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.00002%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	0.0%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Hatchery: Ad-Clip	0.0%

Because the research would take place in the Columbia River mainstem, it is not possible to determine from where in the listed units the juveniles would originate and thus we cannot ascribe the impact to individual populations or to any group smaller than the entire listing units. As a result, the deaths of the juveniles must be placed in the contexts of the entire ESUs and DPSs, and the effect at those scales is vanishingly small—as near to zero as it possible to get, in fact. In no instance would the effect exceed the deaths of a few ten-thousandths of a percent of the outmigration for any given species and, in all cases, the effect is the possible death of, at most, one juvenile fish. Thus the research would have, at most, only a very small impact on abundance and no appreciable impact on structure, diversity, or productivity. And even losses that small would to some extent be offset by the information generated from the research, which would be used to improve survival of the species in the future. Moreover, the ODFW has never before reached—let alone exceeded—the amount of take they have been allotted in the many years this research permit has been in effect. And that is one of the reasons why the take they are seeking actually represents a reduction in the amounts they have been permitted for nearly 20 years.

2.6 Cumulative Effects

"Cumulative effects" are those effects of future state or private activities, not involving Federal activities, that are reasonably certain to occur within the action area of the Federal action subject to consultation (50 CFR 402.02). Future Federal actions that are unrelated to the proposed action are not considered in this section because they require separate consultation pursuant to section 7 of the ESA.

Because the action area falls entirely with within navigable waters, the vast majority of future actions in the region will undergo section 7 consultation with one or more of the Federal entities with regulatory jurisdiction over water quality, flood management, navigation, or hydroelectric generation. In almost all instances, proponents of future actions will need government funding or authorization to carry out a project that may affect salmonids or their habitat, and therefore the effects such a project may have on salmon and steelhead will be analyzed when the need arises.

In developing this biological opinion, we considered several efforts being made at the local, tribal, state, and national levels to conserve listed salmonids—primarily the final recovery plans for the fish in the middle and upper Columbia River (and draft plan for the Snake River) and efforts laid out in the 2011 and 2015 status review updates for Pacific salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act (Ford 2011, NWFSC 2015). The result of those reviews was that salmon take—particularly associated with research, monitoring, and habitat restoration—is likely to continue to increase in the region for the foreseeable future. However, as noted above, all actions falling in those categories would also have to undergo consultation (like that documented in this opinion) before they are allowed to proceed.

Non-Federal activities are likely to continue affecting listed species and habitat within the action area. These cumulative effects in the action area are difficult to analyze because of this opinion's large geographic scope, the different resource authorities in the action area, the uncertainties associated with government and private actions, and the changing economies of the region. Whether these effects will increase or decrease is a matter of speculation; however, it seems likely that they will continue to increase as a general pattern over time. The primary cumulative effects will arise from those water quality and quantity impacts that occur as human population growth and development shift patterns of water and land use, thereby creating more intense pressure on streams and rivers within this geography in terms of volume, velocities, pollutants, baseflows, and peak flows. But the specifics of these effects, too, are impossible to predict at this time. In addition, there are the aforementioned effects of climate change—many of those will arise from or be exacerbated by actions taking place in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere that will not undergo ESA consultation. Although state, tribal, and local governments have developed plans and initiatives to benefit listed fish, they must be applied and sustained in a comprehensive way before NMFS can consider them "reasonably foreseeable" in its analysis of cumulative effects.

We can, however, make some generalizations based on population trends. The action area contemplated here is in the State of Idaho and the eastern portions of Oregon and Washington. According to the U.S. Census bureau, the State of Idaho's population has been increasing at about 1% per year over the last several years, but that increase has largely been confined to the State's urban areas. The rural population—the areas where the proposed actions would take place--saw a 14% decrease in population between 1990 and 2012 (Idaho Statesman Journal 2013). This signifies that in the action areas, if this trend continues, there is likely to be a reduction in competing demands for resources such as water. Also, it is likely that streamside development will decrease. However, given the overall increase in population, recreation demand for resources such as the fish themselves may go up—albeit slowly.

The situation is similar for Eastern Oregon and Washington. Both states have seen population increases (between 0.5% and 1.5% per year for Oregon between 2000 and 2010 (Portland State University 2014), and overall 12% for Washington between 2000 and 2010, but the last four-year trend for the rural areas of Eastern Oregon has been relatively flat (Oregon Employment Department 2013) and, though Eastern Washington has also seen some population increase, it has largely been restricted to the population centers rather than the rural areas (Washington Office of Financial management 2012). This signifies that, as with Idaho above, there is little likelihood that there will be increasing competing demands for primary resources like water, but recreational demand for the species themselves will probably increase along with the human population.

One final thing to take into account when considering cumulative effects is the time period over which the activity would operate. The permits here would be good for a maximum of five years and the effects on listed species abundance they generate could continue for up to four years after that, though they would decrease in each succeeding year. We are unaware of any major non-Federal activity that could affect listed salmonids and is certain to occur in the action area during that time frame.

2.7 Integration and Synthesis of Effect

The Integration and Synthesis section is the final step in our assessment of the risk posed to species and critical habitat as a result of implementing the proposed action. In this section, we add the effects of the action (Section 2.5) to the environmental baseline (Section 2.4) and the cumulative effects (Section 2.6), taking into account the status of the species and critical habitat (Section 2.2), to formulate the agency's biological opinion as to whether the proposed action is likely to: (1) Reduce appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing its numbers, reproduction, or distribution; or (2) appreciably diminishes the value of designated or proposed critical habitat for the conservation of the species.

Aside from the considerations listed above, these assessments are also made in consideration of the other research that has been authorized and that may affect the various listed species. The reasons we integrate the proposed take in the permits considered here with the take from other research authorizations are that they are similar in nature and we have good information on what the effects are, and thus it is possible to determine the overall effect of all research in the region on the species considered here. The following three tables therefore (a) combine the proposed take for all the permits considered in this opinion for all components of each species (Table 45), (b) add the take proposed by the researchers in this opinion to the take that has already been authorized in the region (Table 46), and then (c) compare those totals to the estimated annual abundance of each species under consideration (Table 47).

Table 45. Total Requested Take and Mortalities for All Permits and Percentages of the Listed Units by Age Class and Origin.

ESU/DPS	Life Stage	Origin (Com-ponent)	Requested Take	% of Component Taken	Requested Mortality	% of Component Killed
UCR Chinook	Adult	Natural	6	0.19	0	0.0
UCR Chinook	Adult	Hatchery	6	0.12	0	0.0
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	118	0.02	5	0.0009
UCR Chinook	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	131	0.02	6	0.001
UCR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	6	0.14	0	0.0
UCR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery	6	0.04	0	0.0
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	75	0.03	6	0.002
UCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	85	0.01	6	0.0009
MCR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	9	0.05%	0	0.0%
MCR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery	9	0.5%	0	0.0%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	8,656	1.9%	177	0.04%
MCR Steelhead	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	107	0.03%	5	0.001%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Adult	Natural	207	0.88%	3	0.01%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Adult	Hatchery	407	7.9%	5	0.09%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	10,580	0.76%	129	0.009%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	10,290	0.23%	127	0.003%
SR Spr/sum Chinook	Juvenile	Intact Adipose	10,000	0.90%	100	0.09%
SR Fall Chinook	Adult	Natural	213	1.4%	3	0.02%
SR Fall Chinook	Adult	Hatchery	414	0.36%	6	0.005%
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Natural	776	0.14%	28	0.005%

ESU/DPS	Life Stage	Origin (Component)	Requested Take	% of Component Taken	Requested Mortality	% of Component Killed
SR Fall Chinook	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	290	0.001%	27	0.0009%
SR Steelhead	Adult	Natural	5,464	16.4%	64	0.19%
SR Steelhead	Adult	Hatchery	4,056	1.4%	64	0.02%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Natural	30,213	3.4%	327	0.04%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	20,670	0.61%	211	0.006%
SR Steelhead	Juvenile	Intact Adipose	20,500	0.65%	205	0.006%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Natural	12,427	68%	157	0.86%
SR Sockeye	Juvenile	Adipose-clipped	27	0.017%	1	0.0006%

Thus the activities contemplated in this opinion may kill—in combination and at most—as much as 0.86% of the fish from any component of any listed species; that component is juvenile natural sockeye and it is explained in the analysis for permit 1341 – R,

In all other instances found in the table above, the effect is (at most) about a quarter of that figure. Moreover, for reasons given below and in the effects analysis, these figures are probably much lower in actuality, but before engaging in that discussion, it is necessary to add all the take considered in this opinion to the rest of the research take that has been authorized in the interior Columbia River basin.

Table 46. Total Take and Mortalities for All Proposed Permits and All Baseline Research Take that has Already Been Authorized.

	Origin	*Adults Handled*	*Adults Killed*	*Juveniles Handled*	*Juveniles Killed*
UCR Chinook	Natural	618	15	25,966	677
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	297	7	2,467	82
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	414	12	11,274	281
UCR Steelhead	Natural	654	10	47,381	1,163
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	10	17	15,069	409
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	252	7	12,701	331
MCR Steelhead	Natural	4,151	38	176,025	3,166
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	903	10	26,388	760
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	424	12	17,294	367
SR s/s Chinook	Natural	9,780	67	1,341,690	10,640
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	1,640	11	142,388	1,562
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	3,653	10	82,983	720
SR Fall Chinook	Natural	466	7	1,285	104
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	259	5	1,783	73
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	211	3	483	11
SR Steelhead	Natural	12,374	126	416,593	4,440
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	4,731	58	28,764	390
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	3,830	187	37,938	465
SR Sockeye	Natural	164	5	12,571	215
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	2	0	229	7

This signifies that all the research previously authorized for the species considered here—in combination with the proposed actions in this opinion—would have the following impacts in terms of the fish that may be killed.

Table 47. Percentage of Abundance that may be Lost among the Listed Species for All Previously Authorized Research and the All the Permit Actions Analyzed in this Opinion.

	*Origin**	*Adults Killed*	*Percentage of Abundance*	*Juveniles Killed*	*Percentage of Abundance*
UCR Chinook	Natural	15	0.47%	677	0.13%
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	7	0.37%	82	0.02%
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	12	See Note.	281	0.05%
	Total for the listed Unit	**34**	**0.37%**	**1,040**	**0.06%**
UCR Steelhead	Natural	10	0.22%	1,163	0.47%
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	17	0.16%	409	0.06%
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	7	See Note.	331	0.02%
	Total for the listed Unit	**34**	**0.18%**	**1,903**	**0.19%**
MCR Steelhead	Natural	38	0.22%	3,166	0.70%
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	10	1.4%	760	0.22%
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	12	See Note.	367	0.18%
	Total for the listed Unit	**60**	**0.32%**	**4293**	**0.43%**
SR spr/sum Chinook	Natural	67	0.28%	10,640	0.76%
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	11	0.41%	1,562	0.04%
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	10	See Note.	720	0.06%
	Total for the listed Unit	**87**	**0.30%**	**12,922**	**0.19**
SR Fall Chinook	Natural	7	0.05%	104	0.02%
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose Clip	5	0.007%	73	0.002%
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	3	See Note.	11	0.0003%
	Total for the listed Unit	**15**	**0.011%**	**188**	**0.003%**
SR Steelhead	Natural	126	0.38%	4,440	0.49%
	Listed Hatchery: Adipose	58	0.08%	390	0.01%

	Clip				
	Listed Hatchery: Intact Adipose	187	See Note.	465	0.05%
	Total for the listed Unit	**371**	**0.11%**	**5,295**	**0.10%**
SR Sockeye	Natural Fish	5	0.36%	215	1.17%
	Hatchery: Adipose clip	0		7	0.004%
	Total for the listed Unit	**5**	0.36%	**222**	**0.12%**

*For adults, the ad-clipped and non-ad-clipped hatchery percentages are combined (and displayed in the "Listed Hatchery Adipose Clip" lines) because we lack data on the percentage breakdown among those components (note: all adult hatchery sockeye are clipped).

First, note that the numbers in Table 46 and the percentages in Table 47 actually display *decreases* in the amount of baseline take that has previously been authorized (see Table 22). There are two reasons for this: First, nearly all the proposed take in this opinion has already been accounted for in the baseline for a number of years. All the permits here are renewals except for one modification (18696 – 2M) and one new permit (20492) that is, as stated before, largely a renewal itself. As a result, 10 out of 12 of the permits discussed would not add any fish to the baseline at all and the other two add only very small amounts—generally single digits of increased take. The second reason is that the Nez Perce Tribe–who has held the various versions of Permit 1339 for two decades has this year asked to greatly decrease the amounts of take they had previously been authorized. For SR steelhead and spr/sum Chinook, that means they have reduced their overall take by tens of thousands of juveniles and hundreds of adults. And that, in turn, means that they are seeking to decreases mortalities by many hundreds of juvenile and many tens of adults. For fall Chinook the decreases are not as large, but they are still notable.

The consequence of these two factors is that this is the first opinion since NMFS started granting research permits and authorizations in the interior Columbia River basin (more than 20 years ago) in which the actual impact on listed fish is going down, not up.

Because the majority of the fish that researchers capture and release are expected to recover shortly after handling with no long-term ill effects, the most meaningful effect of the action we consider here is the potential number of dead fish from each species. As the table above illustrates, the dead fish from all the permits in this opinion *and* all the previously authorized research would at most amount to a few tenths of a percent of each species' total abundance (with the exception of juvenile sockeye salmon—see below). Thus the research, even the total for the entire program, would likely have only very small negative effects on any of the species considered here. It is appropriate to look at the reductions across the entire listed units because the effects of the combined research program are well-distributed across each of the species' ranges. The exceptions to this—permits for which the effects would be mostly limited to only a portion of the species' ranges—are documented above in the effects section.

Juvenile Fish

As the tables above (45-47) illustrate, in most instances, the research—even in total—would have only very small effects on any species' juvenile abundance (and therefore productivity) and no discernible effect on structure or diversity because the effects would be spread out across each entire species. One possible exception to this is the 0.76% of the natural juvenile SR spr/sum Chinook that the research program may kill in total. While it should be noted that this figure actually represents decreases in the baseline take, it is still means that as many as seven juvenile natural fish out of every thousand may be killed every year by the research efforts in the basin. However, this minor effect has repeatedly been determined to not jeopardize the species, the information being generated is used in critical status monitoring and recovery efforts and, again, the take contemplated in this opinion reduces (by hundreds of animals) the negative effects previously analyzed. Also, in the more than ten years that the primary permits taking these fish has been in effect (Permits 1127, Permit 1134, and Permit 1339 (the first held by the Shoshone-Bannock, the other two held by the Nez Perce Tribes) the researchers have never killed more than 70% of fish they were allotted, and in most years the total mortalities were far less than 50% of the permitted amounts. And finally, when the losses are considered in the context of the entire listed unit instead of simply the natural component, the mortality rate is actually 0.19% in even the most pessimistic scenario—which, though not negligible, is still a very small impact.

The situation is similar for juvenile, natural UCR steelhead. The mortality rate there is 0.47%, which actually represents no increase over what has previously been analyzed and permitted. As with the SR spr/sum Chinook, effects of approximately that magnitude have repeatedly been determined to not jeopardize the species, and the research being conducted serves a critical function in monitoring the species' status. Furthermore, the researchers under the permit with the most take for this species (Permit 1480-3R, held by the USGS) have never in at least the last eight years even approached the actual number of mortalities they were allotted, and in most cases the mortality rate has been on the order of 20% or less of the total allowable mortalities. And, too, the total take for the listed unit falls to 0.19% when the activities are considered in the context of the species as a whole.

Another figure requiring a closer view is the 0.70% of the natural MCR steelhead juveniles that may be killed by research activities in the basin. This number represents a very small effect that has been previously found to not jeopardize the species—the actions considered in this opinion would add no juvenile natural fish to the baseline. It should also be noted that the two largest authorizations for taking this species (held by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Washington Department of fish and Wildlife--ongoing, various authorization numbers) have over the last three years generally not taken more than a third of the allotted number of natural, juvenile MCR steelhead—and in most cases the take amounts have actually been small fractions of that. And here again, the research being conducted in the basin adds critical knowledge about the species' status—knowledge that we are required to have every five years to perform status reviews for this (or any) listed species. And, when the total take is placed in the context of the species as a whole, the effect is 0.43%.

The 0.76% of the natural SP spr/sum Chinook that may be lost also requires further inquiry. As with the species discussed above, the research is important to determining the species' status, the amounts of take allotted by the program have never been approached, the take has been examined multiple times and never found to jeopardize the species, and the actual overall impact on the listed species—even in the worst case scenario—is actually only 0.19%. And in this instance, the number being considered actually represents a substantial decrease in the amount that has previously been allotted. Permit 1339 – 4R would decrease the number of juvenile mortalities (natural fish) accounted for in the baseline by 600.

The 0.49% of the natural SR steelhead that may be lost should also be viewed with some caution. But the same reasoning as above applies: the research being conducted under the program as a whole is integral to determining and monitoring the species' status, the amounts of previously permitted take have repeatedly been found to not jeopardize the species, the actual number of fish taken in all the permits (especially the larges) is consistently far smaller than the number permitted, and the actual impact on the listed unit as a whole is far smaller than on the natural component, coming in at 0.10%. And in this case, the proposed research would actually decrease the number of such fish in the baseline—by several hundred mortalities.

One further thing to note for the above species: all the discussed impacts are ascribed to the natural component of each listed unit, but in actuality the effects are in all cases very likely to be smaller than the displayed percentages. The reason for this is that when in doubt—in those instances where a non-clipped hatchery fish cannot be differentiated from a natural fish—we ask that researchers err to the side of caution and treat all fish with intact adipose fins as if they were natural fish. Given that for the UCR steelhead, unclipped hatchery fish make up 37% of the animals with intact adipose fins, it is undoubtedly the case that some unclipped fish would be taken and counted as natural fish. For MCR steelhead, that figure is 39%, and for SR steelhead, the figure is about 50%. Therefore in all cases, the natural component would in actuality be affected to a lesser degree than the percentages displayed above. It is not possible to know *how much* smaller the take figures would be, but that they are smaller is not in doubt. The overall percentages for the listed unit would, however, remain at the same low levels shown.

The final take figure that should be viewed with caution is the 1.17% of the natural juvenile SR sockeye that may be killed. The effect is a minor one, but the fish are endangered and therefore their condition and the research being conducted on them warrant extra scrutiny. However, in this instance, it is necessary to emphasize two things: first, the take contemplated in this opinion adds no dead sockeye salmon to the baseline, so all of that figure has been analyzed multiple times in the past and been found not to jeopardize the species each time; and second, the entire purpose of the two permits with the most juvenile SR sockeye salmon take (Permit 1124 and Permit 1341—held by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the SBT, respectively) is to help the sockeye survive and recover. Under those permit, the researchers use captive broodstock, outplanting, and other methods and technologies to capture, preserve, and study a number of the few remaining sockeye salmon. And they have never killed the full allotment of juvenile sockeye they are permitted—in fact in the last three years, they have killed only about one-tenth of the number allowed. Furthermore, it is even possible that without the research conducted under Permit 1124 and 1341, the sockeye might have gone extinct. And even if that is not the case, it is inarguable that the research has been critical to the recovery the sockeye are starting to experience.

Moving from the specific to the general, it is necessary to note that for *all* the species the actual take amounts would almost certainly be a great deal smaller than what has been (or may be) authorized—particularly for juvenile fish. There are three reasons for this. First, we develop conservative estimates of juvenile abundance (described in subsection 2.2 above). Second, to account for potential accidental deaths, the researchers request more take and more mortalities than they estimate would actually occur in a given year. To illustrate this, our research tracking system reveals that on average researchers end up taking about 37% of the fish they estimate when applying for a permit and killing about 15% of the numbers they estimate. In the current context, this would mean that for the juvenile take in Table 47, above, that *actual* mortality levels would probably be nearly an order of magnitude smaller than those displayed. They would range in reality from about 0.000075% to about 0.1% for individual components and in no instance would any species as a whole experience a mortality rate greater than about 0.04%. Third, some of the fish that may be affected would be in the smolt stage, but others definitely would not be. These latter would simply be described as “juveniles,” which means they may actually be subyearlings, parr, or even fry. (As an example, several tens of thousands of the MCR steelhead juveniles in the baseline would be fry taken in various efforts.) Thus, fish grouped into the juvenile life stage represent the progeny of multiple spawning years—a much greater number of individuals (perhaps as much as an order of magnitude greater) than is represented by the smolt stage.

Therefore, we derived the already small percentages for juvenile mortalities by (a) conservatively (under)estimating the actual number of outmigrating smolts (Table 23), (b) conservatively (over)estimating the number of fish likely to be killed, and (c) treating each dead juvenile fish as part of the same year class when it is certain that at least some of them won’t be. Thus, it is highly likely that the actual numbers of juvenile salmonids the research would kill are a great deal smaller than the stated figures. But even if the worst-case scenario were to occur and all the fish that may be killed are killed in fact, the effects of even the entire program would still be very small, restricted to abundance and productivity reductions, and the new effects contemplated in this opinion (even in total) would actually decrease those minor effects seen by the program as a whole. And, again, all of the research is designed to benefit fish and their habitats in the Pacific Northwest.

Adult Fish

For the adults, the research effects are similar to those described for the juveniles. The permitted research in the interior Columbia River basin, in total, may kill a few tenths of a percent of the adult escapement for any of the listed species' components. And, because very few adults from any species would be killed by any of the research contemplated here, nearly all of the stated take has already been analyzed in previous opinions and been determined not to jeopardize any of the species considered here. However, killing an adult fish has a potentially a much greater effect than killing a juvenile, so it is necessary to examine more closely some of those impacts as well.

UCR Chinook: One take level to note is the 0.37% of the natural adult UCR Chinook that the research program as a whole may kill. While this figure represents no increase over the baseline take, it is still means that as many as four fish out of a thousand may be killed every year by the research efforts in the Northwest. This is a minor effect, and would not in all probability affect the species' structure or diversity, but the UCR Chinook are an endangered fish and any decrease in their abundance and productivity should be viewed with some caution. However, this effect has previously been examined with respect to the relevant permits and it was determined that the loss would not jeopardize the species. Further, at no time in the last five years has the allotted take level been reached and, in most instances, none were killed at all. In fact, the permit that allows for over half the species adult unintentional mortality—Permit 16979, held by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife—no UCR chinook adults have ever been killed. And again, the actions contemplated in this opinion would not exacerbate that previously analyzed effect because none of the permits would allow any adult fish of this species to be killed.

SR Steelhead: Another take level to note is the 0.38% of the natural adult SR Steelhead that research programs from the interior Columbia River Basin may kill. Though this figure actually represents a decrease in the take that has previously been permitted, it is still means that as many as four natural fish out of a thousand may be killed every year by the research efforts in the basin. However, and as noted earlier, this minor effect has repeatedly been determined to not jeopardize the species and the information being generated is used in critical status monitoring and recovery efforts. Thus, while the species' abundance and productivity would be affected to a slight degree, structure and diversity would almost certainly not see any measurable impact, and critical data on the species' status would continue to be generated. And, too, researchers under the permits with the largest numbers of permitted adult SR steelhead mortalities (Permit 1339, held by the Northwest fisheries Science Center, Permit 1134, held by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe, and Idaho's Adult Weir program under various authorizations) have killed about 25 adult fish, in total, over the last three years.

SR Sockeye: The last species bearing special consideration is SR sockeye. Because the sockeye are endangered, the 0.36% of the adults that may be killed by the program as a whole should be viewed carefully. But for sockeye adults, as with the sockeye juveniles and the other adults examined above, the effects are very small in even the worst case and, for the following reasons, almost certainly would never approach the levels displayed:

- The take contemplated in this opinion adds no dead adult fish to the baseline.
- The researchers with the permit containing the largest amount of adult take (Permit 1124—three dead adults) have killed none in the last five years.
- The adult sockeye mortalities in Permit 1124 (if they were to occur at all) would come from a program whose sole purpose is to conserve sockeye.

And because there is only one SR sockeye population, the very unlikely effect of even the 0.29% loss would be restricted solely to abundance and productivity and would not affect structure and diversity.

The overall situation for adult fish is therefore effectively the same as it is for juvenile fish. The losses are very small and the estimates of adult mortalities are almost certainly much greater than the actual numbers are likely to be. As noted above, over the last several years researchers holding ESA section 10 permits have generally killed about 15% of the adult fish they were allotted. This means that even for the two most-affected species above in Table 47—UCR Chinook and SR sockeye—the actual effect would probably be something more like the removal of about 0.04% for each of them rather than the figures displayed. Still, even in the worst case scenarios the effects are tiny, restricted to abundance and productivity reductions, and to some degree the negative effects would be offset by the information to be gained—information that in all cases would be used to protect salmon and steelhead or promote their recovery.

Thus, we expect the research activities' detrimental effects on the species' abundance and productivity, even in combination with the entirety of the research authorized in the basin, to be very small. And because that slight impact would be distributed throughout the entire listing units' ranges, it would be so attenuated as to have no appreciable effect on spatial structure or diversity. Moreover, we expect all the research actions to generate lasting benefits for the listed fish.

Critical Habitat

As noted earlier, we do not expect the individual actions to have any appreciable effect on any listed species' critical habitat. This is true for all the proposed permit actions in combination as well: the actions' short durations, minimal intrusion, and overall lack of measureable effect signify that even when taken together they would have no discernible impact on critical habitat.

Summary

As noted in the sections on species status, no listed species currently has all its biological requirements being met. Their status is such that there must be a substantial improvement in the environmental conditions of their habitat and other factors affecting their survival if they are to begin to approach recovery. In addition, while the future impacts of cumulative effects are uncertain at this time, they are likely to continue to be negative. Nonetheless, in no case would the proposed actions exacerbate any of the negative cumulative effects discussed (habitat alterations, etc.) and in all cases the research may eventually help to limit adverse effects by increasing our knowledge about the species' requirements, habitat use, and abundance. The effects of climate change are also likely to continue to be negative. However, given the proposed actions' short time frames and limited areas, those negative effects, while somewhat unpredictable, are too small to be effectively gauged as an additional increment of harm over the time span considered in this analysis. Moreover, the actions would in no way contribute to climate change (even locally) and, in any case, many of the proposed actions would actually help monitor the effects of climate change by noting stream temperatures, flows, etc. So while we can expect both cumulative effects and climate change to continue their negative trends, it is unlikely that the proposed actions would have any additive impact to the pathways by which those effects are realized (e.g., a slight reduction in salmonid abundance would have no effect on increasing stream temperatures or continuing land development).

To this picture, it is necessary to add the increment of effect represented by the proposed actions. Our analysis shows that the proposed research activities would have slight negative effects on each species' abundance and productivity, but those reductions are so small as to have no more than a very minor effect on the species' survival and recovery. In all cases, even the worst possible effect on abundance would be far less than one percent, the activity has never been identified as a threat, and the research is designed to benefit the species' survival in the long term.

For over two decades, research and monitoring activities conducted on anadromous salmonids in the Pacific Northwest have provided resource managers with a wealth of important and useful information regarding anadromous fish populations. For example, juvenile fish trapping efforts have enabled managers to produce population inventories, PIT-tagging efforts have increased our knowledge of anadromous fish abundance, migration timing, and survival, and fish passage studies have provided an enhanced understanding of how fish behave and survive when moving past dams and through reservoirs. By issuing research authorizations—including many of those being contemplated again in this opinion—NMFS has allowed information to be acquired that has enhanced resource managers' abilities to make more effective and responsible decisions with respect to sustaining anadromous salmonid populations, mitigating adverse impacts on endangered and threatened salmon and steelhead, and implementing recovery efforts. The resulting information continues to improve our knowledge of the respective species' life histories, specific biological requirements, genetic make-up, migration timing, responses to human activities (positive and negative), and survival in the rivers and ocean. And that information, as a whole, is critical to the species' survival.

Additionally, the information being generated is, to some extent, legally mandated. While no law calls for the work being done in any particular permit or authorization, the ESA (section 4(c)(2)) requires that we examine the status of each listed species every five years and report on our findings. At that point, we must determine whether each listed species should (a) be removed from the list (b) have its status changed from threatened to endangered, or (c) have its status changed from endangered to threatened. Thus it is legally incumbent upon us to monitor the status of every species considered here—and the research program, as a whole, is one of the primary means we have of doing that.

Thus, we expect the detrimental effects on the species to be minimal and those impacts would only be seen in terms of slight reductions in juvenile and adult abundance and productivity. And because these reductions are so slight, the actions—even in combination—would have no appreciable effect on the species' diversity or structure. Moreover, we expect the actions to provide lasting benefits for the listed fish and that all habitat effects would be negligible. And finally, we expect the program as a whole and the permit actions considered here to generate information we need to fulfill our mandate under the ESA.

2.8 Conclusion

After reviewing and analyzing the current status of the listed species and critical habitat, the environmental baseline within the action area, the effects of the proposed action, any effects of interrelated and interdependent activities, and cumulative effects, it is NMFS' biological opinion that the proposed permitting actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of endangered UCR spring Chinook, threatened UCR steelhead, threatened SR spr/sum Chinook, threatened SR fall Chinook, threatened SR steelhead, endangered SR sockeye, or threatened MCR steelhead or destroy or adversely modify any of their designated critical habitat.

2.9 Incidental Take Statement

Section 9 of the ESA and Federal regulations pursuant to section 4(d) of the ESA prohibit the take of endangered and threatened species, respectively, without a special exemption. "Take" is defined as to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. "Harm" is further defined by regulation to include significant habitat modification or degradation that actually kills or injures fish or wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, spawning, rearing, migrating, feeding, or sheltering (50 CFR 222.102). "Incidental take" is defined by regulation as takings that result from, but are not the purpose of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity conducted by the Federal agency or applicant (50 CFR 402.02). Section 7(b)(4) and section 7(o)(2) provide that taking that is incidental to an otherwise lawful agency action is not considered to be prohibited taking under the ESA if that action is performed in compliance with the terms and conditions of this incidental take statement.

In this instance, and for the actions considered in this opinion, there is no incidental take at all. The reason for this is that all the take contemplated in this document would be carried out under permits that allow the permit holders to *directly* take the animals in question. The actions are considered to be direct take rather than incidental take because in every case the permit holders' actual purpose is to take the animals while carrying out a lawfully permitted activity. Thus, the take cannot be considered "incidental" under the definition give above. Nonetheless, one of the purposes of an incidental take statement is to lay out the amount or extent of take beyond which individuals carrying out an action cannot go without being in possible violation of section 9 of the ESA. That purpose is fulfilled here by the amounts of direct take laid out in the effects section above and reiterated in the integration and synthesis section. Those amounts—displayed in the various permits' effects analyses—constitute hard limits on both the amount and extent of take the permit holders would be allowed in a given year. This concept is also reflected in the second paragraph of the reinitiation clause just below.

2.10 Reinitiation of Consultation

As 50 CFR 402.16 states, reinitiation of formal consultation is required where discretionary Federal agency involvement or control over the action has been retained or is authorized by law and if: (1) the amount or extent of incidental taking specified in the incidental take statement is exceeded, (2) new information reveals effects of the agency action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not considered in this opinion, (3) the agency action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect on the listed species or critical habitat that was not considered in this opinion, or (4) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the action.

As noted above, in the context of this opinion, there is no incidental take anticipated and the reinitiation trigger set out in (1) is not applicable. However, if any of the direct take amounts specified in this opinion's effects analysis section (2.4) are exceeded, reinitiation of formal consultation will be required because the regulatory reinitiation triggers set out in (2) and/or (3) will have been met.

2.11 "Not Likely to Adversely Affect" Determination

NMFS's determination that an action "is not likely to adversely affect" listed species or critical habitat is based on our finding that the effects are expected to be discountable, insignificant, or completely beneficial (USFWS and NMFS 1998). Insignificant effects relate to the size of the impact and should never reach the scale where take occurs; discountable effects are those that are extremely unlikely to occur; and beneficial effects are contemporaneous positive effects without any adverse effects on the species or their critical habitat.

SR Killer Whales Determination

The SR killer whale DPS, composed of J, K, and L pods, was listed as endangered under the ESA on November 18, 2005 (70 FR 69903). The final rule listing SR killer whales as endangered identified several potential factors that may have caused their decline or may be limiting recovery. These are: quantity and quality of prey, toxic chemicals which accumulate in top predators, and disturbance from sound and vessel traffic. The rule also identified oil spills as a potential risk factor for this species. The final recovery plan includes more information on these potential threats to SR killer whales (NMFS 2008).

NMFS published the final rule designating critical habitat for SR killer whales on November 29, 2006 (71 FR 69054). Critical habitat includes approximately 2,560 square miles of inland waters including Puget Sound, but does not include areas with water less than 20 feet deep relative to extreme high water. The primary constituent elements (PCEs) of SR killer whale critical habitat are: (1) Water quality to support growth and development; (2) prey species of sufficient quantity, quality, and availability to support individual growth, reproduction and development, as well as overall population growth; and (3) passage conditions to allow for migration, resting, and foraging.

Southern Residents spend considerable time in the Georgia Basin from late spring to early autumn, with concentrated activity in the inland waters of Washington State around the San Juan Islands, and move south into Puget Sound in early autumn. Pods make frequent trips to the outer coast during this season. In the winter and early spring, SR killer whales move into the coastal waters along the outer coast from the Queen Charlotte Islands south to central California.

Southern Residents consume a variety of fish and one species of squid, but salmon, and Chinook salmon in particular, are their preferred prey (review in NMFS 2008). Ongoing and past diet studies of Southern Residents conduct sampling primarily during spring, summer and fall months in inland waters of Washington State and British Columbia (i.e., Ford and Ellis 2006; Hanson et al. 2007; Hanson et al. 2010a; ongoing research by NWFSC). Therefore, our knowledge of diet preferences is specific to inland waters. Less is known about diet preferences of Southern Residents off the Pacific Coast. There are direct observations of two SR killer whale predation events in coastal waters, and in both the prey species was identified as Columbia River Chinook (Hanson et al. 2010b). Chemical analyses also support the importance of salmon in the year-round diet of Southern Residents (Krahn et al. 2002; Krahn et al. 2007). Southern Residents' preference for Chinook salmon in inland waters, even when other species are more abundant, combined with information indicating that the killer whales consume salmon year round, makes it reasonable to expect that Southern Residents likely prefer Chinook salmon when available in coastal waters.

The proposed actions may affect Southern Residents indirectly by reducing availability of their preferred prey, Chinook salmon. As described in the effects analysis for salmonids, approximately 416 juvenile and 17 adult Chinook salmon may be killed during the course of the research; of these, all juveniles would be Chinook salmon from the upper Columba River and the Snake River. However, as the effects analysis illustrated, the juvenile losses are expected to have only very small effects on salmonid abundance and productivity and no appreciable effect on diversity or distribution.

Nonetheless, the fact that the research would take some salmonids could affect prey availability to the whales in future years throughout their range, including in the critical habitat designated in the inland waters of Washington. The ten-year average smolt-to-adult ratio from coded wire tag returns is no more than 0.5% for hatchery Chinook in the Columbia Basin (http://www.cbr.washington.edu/cwtSAR/). Average smolt-to-adult survival of naturally produced Chinook in the Columbia Basin is 1% (Schaller et al. 2007). If one percent of the 416 juvenile Chinook salmon that may be killed by the proposed research activities were otherwise to survive to adulthood, this would translate to the effective loss of four adult Chinook salmon—but because that figure is derived from three different species, it is likely that the killer whales' prey base would be only reduced by a maximum of two adult Chinook.

In addition, the estimated Chinook mortality is likely to be much smaller than stated. First, the mortality rate estimates for most of the proposed studies are purposefully inflated to account for potential accidental deaths and it is therefore very likely that fewer salmonids will be killed by the research than stated. In fact, over the last nine years, researchers have only killed about 37% of the juvenile Chinook salmon for which they were granted lethal take authority. Thus, the actual reduction in prey available to the whales is probably closer to one fish than four.

But even if four adults were killed, given the total quantity of prey available to SR killer whales throughout their range, this small reduction in prey (and the very low probability that any potential adult Chinook would even be intercepted by the whales), would have at most an insignificant effect on the whales' survival and recovery.

Further, it should be noted that the actual adults that may be killed during the course of the research cannot by definition constitute any part of the whales' prey base. Every one of the adult fish that may be killed would die only after they had returned to the Columbia Basin and therefore could not be intercepted by the killer whales in any case. As a result, the adult Chinook deaths would have no effect whatsoever on the killer whales or their habitat.

Similarly, the future loss of Chinook salmon from interior Columbia basin Chinook populations could affect the prey PCE of designated critical habitat for killer whales. As described above, however, and considering the conservative estimate of four Chinook salmon adult equivalents that could be taken by the proposed actions (fish that are unlikely ever to be found in the Puget Sound in any case), and the total amount of prey available in critical habitat, the reduction would be so small that it would not affect the conservation value of the critical habitat in any meaningful or measurable way.

Given these circumstances, and the fact that we anticipate no direct interaction between any of the researchers and the SR killer whales, NMFS finds that potential adverse effects of the proposed research on Southern Residents are insignificant and determines that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, SR killer whales or their critical habitat.

3.0 MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT CONSULTATION

Section 305(b) of the MSA directs Federal agencies to consult with NMFS on all actions or proposed actions that may adversely affect EFH. The MSA (section 3) defines EFH as "those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity." Adverse effect means any impact that reduces quality or quantity of EFH, and may include direct or indirect physical, chemical, or biological alteration of the waters or substrate and loss of (or injury to) benthic organisms, prey species and their habitat, and other ecosystem components, if such modifications reduce the quality or quantity of EFH. Adverse effects on EFH may result from actions occurring within EFH or outside of it and may include site-specific or EFH-wide impacts, including individual, cumulative, or synergistic consequences of actions (50 CFR 600.810). Section 305(b) also requires NMFS to recommend measures that can be taken by the action agency to conserve EFH.

This analysis is based on the habitat effects analysis performed above and descriptions of EFH for Pacific coast salmon contained in the fishery management plans developed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

In this instance, because no adverse effects on habitat are expected, no effects on EFH are anticipated either. As the biological opinion above states, the proposed research actions are not likely, singly or in combination, to adversely affect the habitat upon which Pacific salmon, groundfish, and coastal pelagic species, depend. All the actions are of limited duration, minimally intrusive, and are discountable in terms of their effects, short- or long-term, on any habitat parameter important to the fish.

The action agencies must reinitiate EFH consultation if plans for these actions are substantially revised in a way that may adversely affect EFH, or if new information becomes available that affects the basis for the EFH conservation recommendations (50 CFR Section 600.920(k)).

4.0 DATA QUALITY ACT DOCUMENTATION AND PRE-DISSEMINATION REVIEW

The DQA specifies three components contributing to the quality of a document. They are utility, integrity, and objectivity. This section of the Biological Opinion addresses these DQA components, documents compliance with the DQA, and certifies that this Biological Opinion has undergone pre-dissemination review.

4.1 Utility

Utility principally refers to ensuring that the information contained in this consultation is helpful, serviceable, and beneficial to the intended users. The intended users of this consultation are the applicants and funding/action agencies listed on the first page. The agencies, applicants, and the American public will benefit from the consultation.

Individual copies were made available to the applicants. This opinion will be posted on the Public Consultation Tracking System website (https://pcts.nmfs.noaa.gov/pcts-web/homepage.pcts). The format and naming adheres to conventional standards for style.

4.2 Integrity

This consultation was completed on a computer system managed by NOAA Fisheries in accordance with relevant information technology security policies, and standards set out in Appendix III, "Security of Automated Information Resources," Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130; the Computer Security Act; and the Government Information Security Reform Act.

4.3 Objectivity:

Information Product Category: Natural Resource Plan

Standards: This consultation and supporting documents are clear, concise, complete, and unbiased; and were developed using commonly accepted scientific research methods. They adhere to published standards including the NMFS ESA Consultation Handbook, ESA regulations, 50 CFR 402.01 et seq., and the MSA implementing regulations regarding EFH, 50 CFR 600.

Best Available Information: This consultation and supporting documents use the best available information, as referenced in the References section. The analyses in this opinion and EFH consultation contain more background on information sources and quality.

Referencing: All supporting materials, information, data and analyses are properly referenced, consistent with standard scientific referencing style.

Review Process: This consultation was drafted by NMFS staff with training in ESA and reviewed in accordance with West Coast Region ESA quality control and assurance processes.

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