



## SOUTH PUGET SOUND

*The regional implementation progress report for South Sound was authored by WDFW, with a separate report on the Nisqually sub-region provided by the Nisqually Tribe. No report was provided by the Squaxin Island Tribe. WDFW states that the response was based upon co-manager technical discussions, but not policy review or agreement. This region was reviewed by the HSRG in 2001.*

### ***HSRG Synopsis and Response***

#### **General Description of Region and Hatchery Programs/Issues:**

Chinook and coho stocks in this region have historically been harvested at rates appropriate for hatchery stocks, with natural escapements being a secondary consideration. Consequently, the main purpose for most hatchery programs in this region is harvest. The Nisqually River coho and Chinook programs have secondary conservation goals. A few stocks, like Deschutes coho and White river spring Chinook, have received special protection due to their low abundance, and some stock goals are currently under revision. In the Nisqually River, for instance, the co-managers are developing specific goals for Nisqually fall Chinook, and are considering a change in the management strategy for coho that elevates its conservation status. The biggest challenge for managers in this region will be developing strategies to modify historically large harvest programs to be consistent with new conservation goals.

#### **General Overall Comment about the Co-Manager Report:**

The co-managers in this region have made good progress in regard to sizing hatchery programs to meet specific harvest or conservation needs. The HSRG commends the co-managers for reducing and/or closing several programs in this region, as recommended by the HSRG. The HSRG also commends and supports the Nisqually Tribe for evaluating multiple ways to implement improved broodstock management strategies (integrated or segregated hatchery programs) in the basin. WDFW and the Squaxin Island Tribe are also making significant progress in the development of alternatives for bringing Deschutes River hatchery facilities into regulatory compliance and implementing HSRG recommendations. The comments below do not pertain to steelhead programs. As discussed elsewhere, the co-managers are reviewing the HSRG system-wide steelhead recommendations and will address them in a forthcoming white paper.

#### **1. Stock goals and the role of hatcheries.**

- a) **Are short- and long-term management goals/premises for habitat and conservation and harvest of all regional hatchery- and naturally-spawning salmonid stocks clearly stated? Have specific questions raised in the regional review been adequately addressed?**

The co-managers have separately reviewed and confirmed the goals for their regional stocks that formed the premise for the HSRG's recommendations. The co-managers have not yet reached agreement on all stock goals.



- b) Is the purpose (harvest, conservation, education, etc.) of each hatchery program stated? Have specific questions raised in the regional review been adequately addressed?**

The co-managers explicitly stated the purposes of all hatchery programs in the region during the regional review process. It is not clear if they have revisited these purposes since the regional review. Most questions raised by the HSRG have been fully addressed.

- c) Is the program type (integrated vs. segregated) identified and explained for each hatchery program? Have specific questions raised in the regional review been adequately addressed?**

Every hatchery program in the region was clearly identified as either integrated or segregated during the regional review process. It is not clear if the co-managers have revisited these program types since the regional review.

**2. Steps taken (decisions made and actions taken) towards meeting short- and long-term expectations**

- a) Has significant progress been made to achieve desired hatchery- and naturally-spawning proportions in the hatchery broodstock and on the spawning grounds for integrated and segregated programs?**

The HSRG guidelines for integration and segregation have been largely met in the region. Exceptions include Squaxin Net pen coho, where the level of straying is being studied, and the Nisqually Chinook and coho programs, where the Nisqually Tribe is evaluating management alternatives. The Nisqually Tribe has taken positive action by investigating the feasibility of a mainstem weir as an option for achieving proper integration or segregation, if they intend to maintain the program at its current size. The HSRG supports this as a high priority for funding, if this strategy is selected.

- b) Have steps been taken to size programs consistent with goals for all hatchery- and naturally-spawning stocks? Have specific questions raised in the regional review been adequately addressed?**

The HSRG commends the co-managers for appropriately sizing most of the programs in this region. The HSRG recommended during the regional review that eight programs and one hatchery in this region be discontinued or reduced in size (number smolts released). McAllister Creek hatchery was closed and the Chambers Creek Chinook, Garrison Springs chum, Nisqually coho, Coulter Creek Chinook, and Minter Creek pink programs were either reduced or discontinued. The Minter Creek chum and White River (Hupp Springs) programs were not eliminated as recommended. The HSRG also recommended that the co-managers evaluate regional carrying capacity, especially for coho. It is not clear whether this evaluation is taking place. While progress has been made, the managers



in this region have generally not developed goals for harvest contribution of hatchery programs explicit enough to specifically size the programs to meet these needs.

**c) Have steps been taken to better meet hatchery operational guidelines, from broodstock collection through release? Have specific questions raised in the regional review been adequately addressed?**

The co-managers have addressed most recommendations, to the extent available funds have allowed. They are committed to implementing most reforms and to meeting HSRG operational guidelines. Stable funding for facilities and operations must be a high priority, to sustain hatchery reform over time.

**3. Steps taken to track progress toward expected outcomes**

Please see general HSRG comments about managing for success.

**a) Will status of major stock goals (e.g. harvest and escapement) be monitored over time?**

Regional catch contributions and spawning escapement estimates are made annually. All hatchery Chinook and coho releases in this region have been adipose fin marked or tagged, in order to understand the spawner composition. Hatchery releases are also well represented, with tagged groups for estimating harvest contribution. There have also been increased efforts to survey spawning grounds, in response to an increased emphasis on natural production in the region.

**b) Will contributions of each hatchery program towards its purpose be monitored over time (e.g. contributions toward harvest and escapement)?**

The co-managers have made the most of their available resources in this region, however the potential need to expand spawning ground surveys and stock identification sampling programs, in particular, should be reviewed as a part of the development of a comprehensive monitoring plan for the region. A weir in the Nisqually Basin would be a useful tool for monitoring purposes, in addition to broodstock management. Stable funding is needed for long-term monitoring of stock composition on the spawning grounds. The monitoring of hatchery contributions to harvest and natural spawning escapement is critical for tracking the success of both integrated and segregated programs.

**c) Will contributions of hatchery-origin fish to broodstock and natural escapement be estimated with sufficient accuracy and precision over time?**

As previously mentioned, a weir in the Nisqually Basin would increase the accuracy and precision of estimates of abundance and stock composition. It is likely that additional spawning surveys and biosampling will be needed in this region, as in others, in order for adequate accuracy and precision to be achieved.