



Looking Ahead

When the HSRG began reaching conclusions about how hatcheries can be better used to meet the twin goals of helping conserve wild salmon and supporting sustainable fisheries, it became apparent that hatcheries can no longer be designed, operated and evaluated in isolation. In order to properly evaluate the benefits and risks from a hatchery program, it is necessary to examine the program in the context of the watershed in which it resides and the goals for all stocks in the watershed. This means first understanding the current and expected future status of all hatchery and natural stocks in the watershed and the habitat on which they rely. Only when these factors are understood can managers determine if their conservation and harvest goals for the watershed are appropriate, whether a hatchery program is the right tool for helping reach those goals, and, if so, what type and size of program will maximize benefits and minimize the risks.

This watershed-based approach goes beyond hatchery management, representing a new model for holistic management of salmon and other natural resources, one that takes into account all the factors that affect a species and the habitat in which it resides. The HSRG's principles, recommendations and tools provide a pathway for moving toward this new management model. For this reason, the work is attracting attention from the federal agencies charged with implementing the Endangered Species Act. NOAA Fisheries is planning to use the HSRG's tools to aid its evaluation of the salmon recovery plans it will be receiving in 2005. USFWS is forming a task team to apply the HSRG's principles, recommendations and tools to all of its hatchery programs in the Northwest region.

The Washington State Governor's Office, the Shared Strategy for Salmon Recovery in Puget Sound, and others are relying on the Hatchery Reform Project for direction on how hatchery reform can be integrated with habitat recovery and harvest management for the recovery plans those parties have committed to provide NOAA Fisheries. NOAA Administrator Conrad Lautenbacher has pledged that his agency will ensure the HSRG's approach to hatchery reform is implemented. The Northwest Power and Conservation Council retained the HSRG chair and co-chair in 2003 in a separate project, to conduct a review of all artificial production facilities in the Columbia River Basin (called the Artificial Production Review and Evaluation or APRE) using the HSRG's scientific framework and review tools. WDFW has indicated that it intends to use the HSRG's principles, framework and tools on all its hatchery programs. The project has also attracted attention from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Department of Fisheries and Oceans-Canada.