COLVILLE TRIBES FISH & WILDLIFE NEWS

RETURN OF THE WOLF

In 2007 and 2008, Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT) wildlife staff began conducting winter snow track surveys in an effort to determine the presence of lynx (Lynx canadensis), marten (Martes americana), fisher (Martes pennanti), wolverine (Gulo gulo) and gray wolf (Canis lupus) on the Colville Reservation.

In the first year, CCT wildlife staff documented three separate sets of large canine tracks consistent of gray wolf. In addition, several hound hunters and trappers reported observing large canine tracks. "In 2009, we began deploying remote cameras in several of these locations, as well as areas where sightings were reported," said Eric Krausz, wildlife biologist for Colville Tribes Fish and Wildlife (CTFW). "In addition, samples were collected to determine DNA through fecal analysis."

In the winter of 2010 and 2011, samples were submitted to the Laboratory for Conservation and Ecological Genetics at the University of Idaho in order to determine whether the DNA was from gray wolf, wolf-dog hybrid, coyote, or dog. "In 2010, one DNA sample submitted from the Colville Reservation was confirmed to be gray wolf," said Krausz. "In addition, we are attempting to establish the likely origin of the wolf in order to determine if we have wolves naturally emigrating from B.C. Canada or dispersing from Idaho and Montana populations."

As reports of wolf sightings, howling and tracks increased in 2009 and 2010, CCT wildlife staff increased remote camera survey efforts on the Colville Reservation. "In June of 2011, we captured our first photo of what appeared to be a gray wolf," said Randy Friedlander, wildlife program manager for CTFW. "Since then, we have photographed two additional wolves."

Capture efforts are planned for the spring of 2012 in order to deploy two Global Positioning System (GPS) collars on gray wolves. Data obtained from these collars will allow wildlife managers to monitor seasonal movements and analyze home range.

In an effort to identify management objectives for gray wolves on the Colville Reservation, the CTFW Department will begin drafting a wolf management plan for the Reservation and North Half. "The plan will utilize a balanced approach between the Tribes' wolf recovery and conservation objectives," said Friedlander.

The CCT wildlife staff would like to encourage people to assist in the monitoring effort by reporting any sightings, pictures, howling or tracks. On the Colville Tribes website www.colvilletribes.com, people can find an observation form that can be filled out. Together, we can manage gray wolves effectively on the Colville Reservation and North Half while maintaining subsistence and ceremonial hunting needs of the tribal membership and their families. The CTFW Department will attend district meetings in January to hear public comments.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE PROJECT PARTNERS

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation 1872
Bonneville Power Administration
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
US Army Corps of Engineers
Chelan County PUD Power
Grant County Public Utility District
Douglas County PUD

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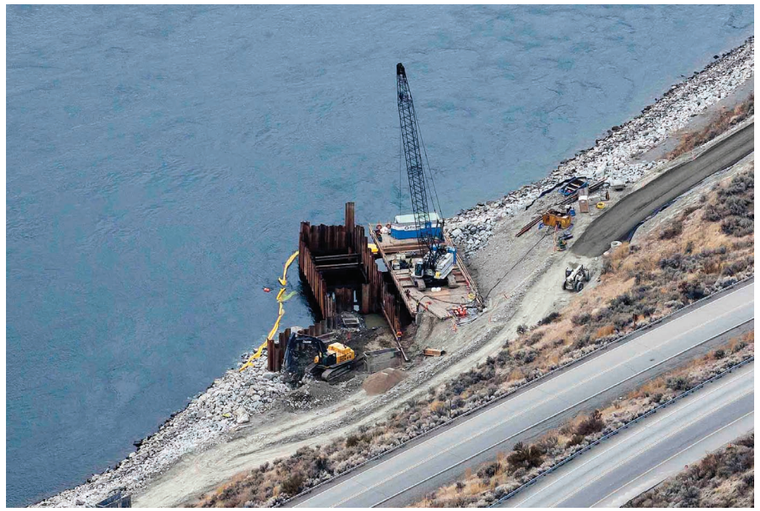

BUILDING A FISH LADDER STARTS WITH THE COFFERDAM

Construction of a fish ladder is challenging under most conditions. When the location is just below a dam and powerhouse that can release huge volumes of water (135 million gallons per minute!) during spring runoff, the challenge is even greater. The hatchery ladder is being constructed on the most accessible portion of land near the hatchery site, about a half mile below the dam and directly in line with discharge from the generators. The river bank in this area is underlain by boulders, sand and gravel, and protected at the surface with rip-rap (large rock).

Another challenge to construction in this location is the fluctuating water surface level— as much as 16-feet. The water surface is controlled by both the flow below the Chief Joseph Dam, and by the operations at Wells Dam, downriver from Chief Joseph Dam.

The aerial photo shows the preparation being made to commence construction of the ladder. The crane is sitting on a temporary structure which is built like a pier supporting a heavy timber working deck. The cofferdam is being constructed to the left of the temporary pier and is also temporary. Once the walls of the box are completed, steel rock anchors are drilled and grouted into the bedrock below the cofferdam. The next step is to cast a thick concrete slab under water (called tremie) within the confines of the cofferdam. The weight of the tremie slab and the anchors make it possible to pump out the water within the cofferdam.

Construction of the reinforced concrete ladder and the bypass pipeline are scheduled to begin in early January. Crews will be working long hours to complete the structure prior to high spring flows when spilling occurs, so the cofferdam can be removed. When the ladder is complete, it will allow returning adult Chinook to swim up and into a concrete shaft that will serve as a fish elevator. Once the correct number of salmon congregate at the base of the shaft, a door will close and the shaft will fill with water. The salmon are then raised by a moveable bar screen floor that rises through the water column. At the top of the shaft, workers will sort the hatchery fish (with clipped adipose fins) from the wild fish, returning the wild fish to the river. Some hatchery fish will go to one of six raceways to ripen (become ready to spawn). Surplus hatchery fish will be harvested for tribal distribution and ceremonial purposes.

When the adult fish in the raceways are ripe, they will be spawned and the eggs taken to the main hatchery building to incubate, hatch, rear and acclimate in the ponds before being released in the main stem Columbia or one of several locations along the Okanogan.

COMING ATTRACTIONS – THE FISH SLIDE!

Next spring the rearing ponds, two at 38,000 cubic feet and one at 79,000 cubic feet will be completed. Fish will grow out in the ponds until they are ready to begin their journey to the Pacific Ocean. Smolts leaving the ponds to swim down the Columbia River will depart via the fish slide, the hatchery version of a waterpark thrill ride for young fish. The slide is actually a carefully assembled transit system that allows migrating fish to safely enter the river. The slide is designed to dampen the velocity of the transport water so fish are not harmed when entering the river. The fun part is the upturned bend at the end of the slide that gives each fish a momentary airborne thrill before plopping safely into the river to begin their journey out to the Pacific Ocean.

NOAA FISHERIES AND COLVILLE TRIBES FISH AND WILDLIFE PROMOTE UPPER COLUMBIA SPRING CHINOOK RECOVERY EFFORT

On Monday, December 5, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries and the Colville Tribes Fish and Wildlife (CTFW) Department announced a joint effort to reintroduce spring Chinook into the Okanogan Basin.

NOAA Fisheries and Colville tribal officials spoke at a meeting at the Okanogan County Commissioners' Hearing Room that afternoon where a handful of people attended. "A year ago we received a proposal from the Colville Tribe and then we caught up to speed and began asking for public comment," said Lynn Hatcher, NOAA Fisheries salmon recovery coordinator. "We are here to present where we are at today and that we are looking at section 10(j) as one option."

Hatcher is referring to Section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act that allows release of an experimental population of a species outside its current range but within its historical range for the purpose of conservation and recovery. Under the Colville Tribes' proposal to NOAA, Methow Composite stock spring Chinook released into the Okanogan River and its tributaries would be designated as an "experimental population" to allow for more flexibility in managing this population of fish.

Joe Peone, CTFW director, gave a presentation and explained the cultural significance of salmon. "Salmon is an important food source for tribal members and we use salmon in our ceremonies," said Peone. "In no way do we want to harm local governments or businesses with this plan, otherwise the Tribe wouldn't be behind it. The Tribe is a local government and owns several businesses."

"I want everyone here to understand what's involved and what's not," said Okanogan County Commissioner Bud Hover. "We are doing something here to achieve delisting sooner."

Eric Murray, NOAA fisheries biologist said, "What we are proposing allows for reintroduction of a species outside its range, for designation of an experimental population and allow for reduction of regulatory restrictions, making it easier to re-introduce the salmon."

According to NOAA, the next steps involve several regulatory and public notice-and-comment processes before the agency considers issuing a final rule. "We want to get this done as quickly as possible, by the end of summer 2012," said Murray.

"We want this designation until there is enough fish to populate the Okanogan," said Peone. "We are looking at Methow Comps, it's genetically a better fish than Carson-stock and the Canadian Tribes are not interested in Carson-stock. We haven't set any production goals. The idea is we want to contribute to recovery."

About 25 people attended the evening meeting at the Koala Street Grill, located in Omak, Washington. Hover kicked off the meeting introducing staff from both NOAA and the CTFW Department. "I have to believe we can do this," he said. "One of the things I have learned is how important culturally the fish are to the tribes."

"In May and June of each year Native Americans of the many tribes up and down the Okanogan River gathered at the lower Osoyoos Lake where it meets the Okanogan River," said Peone. "Their purpose was a common one, to catch the first returning salmon of the year, spring Chinook. In addition, this first salmon called for a ceremony as our ancestors taught us."

FISHING DERBY PLANNED

The first annual "Trippin' With the Triploids" fishing derby will take place on Sat., May 12, 2012. This exciting tournament will be held at Rufus Woods Lake with many prizes, including a fully loaded fishing boat valued at $40,000 and four cash prizes. This event is being sponsored by Nell's Cafe, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Army Corp of Engineers, Bridgeport State Park and Grizzly's Bait and Tackle. For more information, call David or Nancine at 509-686-3901.

Jerry Sam, Foreman

EMPLOYEES AT WORK

Casey Baldwin recently began his position as senior research scientist for the CTFW Department. Baldwin comes to us from the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife with 14 years of experience as a research scientist. In his new position, Baldwin will oversee all fisheries research conducted on and off- reservation waters and in tribal hatcheries. He will work with existing staff and programs to investigate hatchery and wild/natural fish interactions. Baldwin will determine the success of restoration and recovery programs, evaluate selective harvest techniques and address guidelines and requirements of the Endangered Species Act and other legal mandates. "I am looking forward to working across the diverse range of fish research projects and with staff to help the department achieve its objectives and communicate our good work back to funding agencies, colleagues, the tribal membership, and the general public."

Jerry Sam, foreman for PCL, has worked in the construction field for over 30 years. He has been working at CJH since May of last year. During the first phase of construction, Sam assisted with building the houses that are located just above the hatchery. He is currently working on metals and footings, walkways and steel beams for the raceways. The steel beams will support netting to keep bird predators from eating the fish. Sam has done a lot of concrete work on the office and storage buildings and set up about a mile of the retaining walls for the raceways. This is not Sam's first go around constructing hatcheries. "I worked on one in Cle Elum for the Yakama Tribe and on the Colville Tribes' trout hatchery back in the 90's," he said. "I enjoy this kind of work, it keeps me busy and the pay is good."

Dallas Joe, carpenter for PCL, has approximately 25 years of construction experience under his belt. He worked for Colville Tribal Service Corporation for about 20 years, and for Graham and now PCL. Joe has enjoyed working at CJH doing concrete and steel work. When the project first began, he worked on the restroom, RV pads, pumphouse and on the houses. On past construction jobs, Joe has worked on high rises, bridges, schools, longhouses and more. "I do enjoy working on this project," said Joe. "It's hard work, it keeps you in shape and there's something new everyday and in January, I'll start working on the fish ladders."

Pat Tonasket recently began his new position for the CTFW Department as a policy analyst. He has worked for the department as deputy director since 2008, supervising anadromous, wildlife, resident and administration divisions. In his new position, he will provide legal and policy support to the department director and staff. Tonasket will also provide policy recommendations on issues and matters pertaining to the Endangered Species Act, salmon recovery, and relevant federal and state legislation. He will be responsible for monitoring and analyzing federal and state administrative, legislative, and judicial developments that may impact the Tribe's Fish and Wildlife interests with particular emphasis on Columbia River fisheries. "I look forward to addressing challenging policy issues both new and old that we face today," said Tonasket. "Although my position doesn't make policy decisions; it is my responsibility to make sure the people that make decisions are well informed about issues, and recommend positions that will maximize benefit to the Tribes and its members."

Casey Baldwin, Sr. Research Scientist

Pat Tonasket, Policy Analyst

Dallas Joe, Carpenter