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COLVILLE TRIBES FISH & WILDLIFE NEWS

WILDLIFE STAFF WILL TRAVEL TO NEVADA TO CAPTURE PRONGHORN

A trip to Nevada to capture pronghorn this winter is in the works for the Colville Tribes' Fish and Wildlife (CTFW) Department. Wildlife staff will take approximately two to three days to capture, collar, and transport the animals from Nevada to the southwest corner of the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington State. The details of how many pronghorn are unknown at this time.

"We will try to minimize stress through changing up how we process the pronghorn once they are captured," said Richard Whitney, wildlife manager for CTFW. "Capture methods will be similar, using helicopters to net gun them, but protocols have been modified to limit stress. We will potentially collar all of the adults with GPS collars but not the fawns."

The GPS collars will assist wildlife staff in tracking the pronghorn, identifying habitat usage, daily and seasonal migration patterns, and if an animal is deceased.

Modifications to existing fence lines are also being conducted to increase landscape permeability for pronghorn. "The wildlife mitigation team will be modifying boundary fencing by raising bottom wire height, installing buck and pole style fencing, modifying fence corner design and bottom wire clips," said Sam Rushing, wildlife biologist for CTFW. "They will also be working on removing interior fencing on Wildlife Management Areas that are obsolete and unneeded. Outside of the mitigation work, wildlife staff will work with the tribes' Land Operations Department and private landowners to make similar changes to range unit fences to benefit pronghorn."

At the end of January 2016, wildlife staff released 52 pronghorn for the first time on the Colville Indian Reservation.

The pronghorn will be released on land that is primarily managed for the benefit of wildlife and their habitats through funding provided by Bonneville Power Administration to offset a portion of their wildlife mitigation obligation for the loss of wildlife habitats during the construction of Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams.

Helicopter Crew Captured Pronghorn Jan. 2016

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE PROJECT PARTNERS

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CHIEF JOSEPH HATCHERY UPDATE

Staff check for a coded wire tag in the snout

The Chief Joseph Hatchery (CJH) staff started spawning summer Chinook salmon the first week of October, and finished the second week of November. They spawned 521 wild-origin fish and 482 hatchery-origin fish.

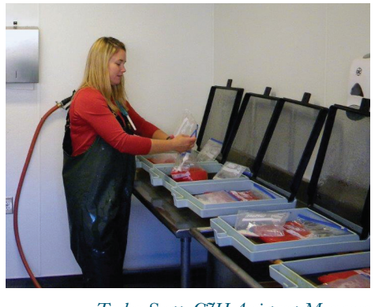
"When a female is ready to spawn, her eggs are removed from the belly cavity, and the eggs fall into a bucket," said Pat Phillips, CJH manager. "The eggs are then placed into a gallon zip-lock bag for transport up to the incubation room. The milt from the male is also placed into a zip-lock bag." He continued, "Once at incubation, the milt is mixed into the baggie with the eggs for fertilization. After about a minute, the eggs are poured into a tray, and placed into a vertical stack with water flowing through it, for development and hatching."

There are currently 815,500 spring Chinook eggs and 2,640,000 summer Chinook eggs in incubation. The staff is carefully monitoring the fish eggs, watching their development, tallying and picking mortality.

In November, hatchery staff transported fish to Riverside, Omak and Simikameen acclimation sites. They delivered 2015 MetComp spring Chinook to the Riverside Pond, and the 2015 summer Chinook to the Omak Pond and the Similkameen Pond. A total of 203,000 spring Chinook were transported, as well as 167,000 summer Chinook to Similkameen, and 213,000 to Omak. "Well water temperatures were warmer than normal this fall, so we struggled with keeping the fish from growing too fast," said Phillips.

Staff will soon begin the process of taking fry out of the incubators and rearing the fish.

Fish techs collect Chinook salmon for spawning



Taylor Scott, CJH Assistant Manager activates salmon eggs

EMPLOYEE & SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS

(Pictured L to R) Tyrell Abrahamson, Jeanette Finley, Chuck Brushwood,Oly Zacherle, Keith Kistler

KEITH KISTLER, senior fisheries biologist, was selected for "Supervisor of the Year" for the Anadromous Division. For several years he has been responsible for completing the administrative tasks required to successfully execute the OSHIP program with an annual budget exceeding one million dollars. Kistler has obtained his real estate license and assisted in securing properties and conducted boundary line adjustments for the sale of structures from acquired lands. He enrolled in two classes, bio-engineering and riparian vegetation and completed a class in ichthyology. He is currently enrolled in a course for wetland ecology and delineation.

CHUCK BRUSHWOOD, principle policy analyst, was awarded "Supervisor of the Year" for the Administrative Division. He has been with CTFW since 2009 and is a great asset to the team. He has shown due diligence and professionalism in the projects he manages. This year has been a challenging one as he continues to work through the BPA Land and Purchase program for the Antoine Valley Ranch acquisition, water right issues, and other property management projects. Brushwood assists with anadromous issues and supports resident fish, wildlife and administration. He conducts extensive research, makes recommendations, and is always prepared to present his work.

ERIC KRAUSZ, wildlife biologist, was selected for "Supervisor of the Year." Krausz has been a vital member in the planning, initiation, and completion of many projects within the Wildlife Division. This includes pronghorn captures, forest carnivore surveys, wolf trapping, and aerial surveys to name a few. In the past, he has always gone from one task to the next; knocking off as many as he could within a year. This year, he has taken the time to slow down and focus on making key things that we do better. He cares deeply for the resource and wants to forward our management through science-based strategies. His passion for wildlife management is clearly evident.

TYRELL ABRAHAMSON, wildlife technician, was selected for "Employee of the Year." He is a member of the mitigation team and has shown his dedication to the resource through hard work and leadership. Although he is not a supervisor, he has not failed to take on a leadership role when needed. He holds himself to a high standard and always shows up on time ready to take on the day's work. Abrahamson has taken on any new task and usually excels at completing them. He is not afraid to question the way things are done and make suggestions as to how they can be completed better. He has gained valuable work experience and knowledge and has performed above expectations and has been a great employee, worthy of recognition.

JENNIFER MERCADO, budget and business analyst, was awarded "Employee of the Year" for the Administrative Division. She was hired in February of this year, however; with her extensive accounting background and degree in business administration, she was able to hit the ground running for the accounting team. She was instrumental with the department's goal of getting caught up with our funding agencies invoices. Her technical experience along with great interpersonal skills allowed the team to achieve outstanding results. She understands and believes in the problem solving approach which has provided her positive feedback from her peers, project leads, and staff.

JASON MCLELLAN, research scientist, was chosen for "Supervisor of the Year" for the Resident Fish Division. He has performed exceptionally well managing three large scale projects for the program. This year, he took on added duties as he lost three biologists within the same project. He filled the role of senior biologist this year while mentoring two new biologists for the Lake Roosevelt Habitat Improvement Project. McLellan also provided support across our entire program providing critical review of documents, attending and participating in technical meetings and workshops, and has assisted with the development of new research projects for the Resident Fish Program and salmon reintroduction and passage.

AWARDS CONTINUED

JEANETTE FINLEY, creel technician, was chosen for "Employee of the Year" for the Resident Fish Division. She has been a highly accountable, hardworking employee that deserves to be recognized for her contributions to the Fish and Wildlife Department. Finley has worked as a fisheries technician for the Resident Fish Hatchery Monitoring and Evaluation program since May of 2014. In her current duties, she primarily performs creel surveys on Twin Lakes and coded-wire tag analysis. In addition to being accountable and hardworking, she has been a pleasure to have as an employee because of her positive attitude, eagerness to learn, and ability to communicate effectively with anglers.

OLY ZACHERLE, fisheries technician, was selected for "Employee of the Year" for the Anadromous Fish Division. He proved himself in 2016 as an integral and reliable member of the OBMEP habitat program. His initiative was fundamental to completing annual habitat surveys well ahead of schedule and with attention to detail. He readily assumed a field lead role in 2016, allowing our staff to divide into multiple crews for the first time. This doubled our work capacity on many days this season. His contributions made each project more efficient and tremendously improved the quality of work and the work environment. Zacherle really stepped up this year for the program.

OWHI LAKE FISHERY

Montana Pakootas, Fish Tech, Owhi Lake

Owhi Lake remains a popular brook trout fishery for members of the Colville Tribes. In order for fisheries managers to achieve their goal of providing an ideal subsistence and recreational fishery, they evaluate several objectives each year. As of spring 2016, the brook trout population in Owhi Lake was estimated to be approximately 18,000.

"To meet our objectives, the lake is stocked each year with 10,000 yearling brook trout in the fall, stocking more or larger fish will generally exceed the availability of resources in the lake and lead to brook trout in poor condition," said Ben Cross, fisheries biologist for CTFW. "By October, brook trout produced from the previous October's brood stock collection have reached a size at the hatchery where they are able to survive well once released into Owhi Lake."

Each year, fisheries biologists monitor the relative abundance, condition, growth, and size distribution of brook trout in the lake to evaluate the success of the stocking program. Their research assesses the population of brook trout that can be supported by the prey and habitat resources in the lake. Cross said, "We continue to collect data that will be used to determine the level of natural recruitment."

The average size of brook trout available to anglers in 2015 was approximately 13.5 inches, which was smaller than usual because of an egg disinfection incident that destroyed egg viability in 2014. "Because of the disinfection incident in 2014, brook trout stocked in the spring of 2015 increased the frequency of catchable fish smaller than 13 inches in the lake. As of 2016, the average size anglers can expect to catch increased to 15 inches," Cross said.

"Our staff continues to make improvements in brood stock management by being more conscious about genetic concerns, fish health, and spawning protocols by improving egg-to-fry survival. In addition, we monitor water quality on a monthly basis."

There are some water quality concerns related to the amount of nutrients in the lake and prevalent blue-green algae blooms during some summer months that may cause future issues. The current state of productivity in Owhi Lake supports a robust fishery, but increased nutrients may cause a reduction in fish habitat availability and degrade desirable fish prey populations.

Hatchery staff collecting fish eggs at Owhi Lake

Staff hold male brook trout from Owhi Lake for spawning