Colville Confederated Tribes
Fish & Wildlife Department

12/6/2022

Reintroducing Salmon Upstream of Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams

Purpose: As stated by Colville Tribal elder Mary Marchand, *"If you bring back our salmon, you will bring back our culture."* Our goal is to reconnect salmon to their historic habitat and to the people. Release locations and numbers of salmon will be selected to meet multiple objectives including spawning, harvest, ceremonies and research. The effort includes a science-based phased approach to test feasibility as well as cultural and educational releases that focus more on providing fish for ceremonies, harvest, public outreach and ecological benefits.

Phase I is complete. The work included assessment of habitat availability and suitability, fish stock and risk assessments which looked at the genetic, disease, competition, and predation risks and benefits of 40 fish stocks across five species. A life cycle model was developed to estimate outcomes of restoration scenarios. Phase 1 also included evaluating passage facilities and technologies at existing dams to determine how it might be applicable to Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams, as well as next steps.

Phase II involves experimental pilot releases of chinook salmon into blocked areas and the design and testing of interim passage facilities. Coordination with federal agencies on permitting and funding require a lot of work. We expect this phase to take at least 20 years to complete.

Cultural and educational releases will continue in conjunction with the phased approach.

Goals of the cultural and educational releases include:

- Meet cultural and ceremonial needs of the tribes by reconnecting salmon with their historic habitat and reconnecting people with the salmon.
- Contribute to knowledge about movement, survival, and behavior of fish in the streams, reservoirs and dams that will answer key uncertainties or better inform the development of experimental designs for studies in later phases of reintroduction.
- Provide opportunity for salmon to spawn in the natural environment to generate offspring for downstream fisheries and future stock for additional reintroductions.
- Ecosystem benefits such as reintroduction of marine derived nutrients for stream, riparian, forest and wildlife.

The Colville Confederated Tribes, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and other stakeholders have been working on salmon reintroduction upstream of Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams for many years, and the efforts are starting to pay off.

In 2014, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) adopted the phased approach in their fish and wildlife program. In 2019, the Phase 1 report was delivered to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council and it received a favorable review by their Independent Scientific Advisory Board. In recent years, the efforts received support and recognition from Governor Inslee's Orca Task Force, the Columbia Basin Partnership, and the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. The Colville Tribes and our partners at UCUT, U.S. Geological Survey, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and WDFW are now working on Phase 2.

Since 2019, the Colville Tribes' Fish and Wildlife Department released hundreds of adult chinook salmon into the waters of the blocked area (above both dams) to support ceremonies and implement studies to evaluate fish performance and behavior. Despite the uncertainty regarding the implementation timeline for Phase 2, the tribe still plans to release juvenile and adult salmon each year to support research, tribal ceremonies and provide harvest opportunity.

Cultural and Educational Releases of adult chinook:

August - September 2019:

Salmon Release Ceremony at Rufus Woods Campground	(30 adult chinook)
Salmon Release Ceremony, Keller/Sanpoil Arm	(30 adult chinook)
Salmon Release Ceremony, Kettle Falls	(30 adult chinook)
Movement, behavior, survival, acoustic tracking study, Lake Rufus Woods	(59 adult chinook)
Cultural release, ecological restoration Lake Rufus Woods	(93 adult chinook)

July - August 2020:

Movement, behavior, survival, acoustic tracking study, Lake Roosevelt	(50 adult chinook)
Survival, spawning study, ecological restoration, Sanpoil River	(100 adult chinook)

July - August 2021:

Survival, spawning study, ecological restoration, Sanpoil River	(178 adult chinook)
Cultural release, ecological restoration, Keller Park	(57 adult chinook)
Cultural release, ecological restoration, Lake Rufus Woods	(107 adult chinook)

August 2022:

Cultural release, spawning study, ecological restoration in the Sanpoil	(155 adult chinook)
Cultural release, ecological restoration Lake Rufus Woods	(191 adult chinook)
Cultural release, spawning study, transboundary reach/Northport	(64 adult chinook)

Note: *Additional salmon releases in the blocked area have been conducted during this time period by the Okanogan Nation Alliance, the Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. In the spring of 2022, the UCUT released approximately 6,000 tagged juvenile chinook upstream of Chief Joseph Dam, Grand Coulee Dam, and Spokane River dams to monitor and study their journey to and from the ocean.*