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February 28, 2008

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Jim Ruff, Manager, Mainstem Passage and River Operations

SUBJECT: Update on status of Snake River Fall Chinook Transportation Study

Based on information I have recently received from the Corps of Engineers (Corps), the following is a synopsis of the current status of the Corps-funded Snake River Fall Chinook Transportation Study for 2008. In summary, the Corps is currently satisfied with all logistical aspects of the transport study for this year.

- The Corps has already met one major milestone of PIT-tagging 45,000 Snake River fall Chinook yearlings at Lyons Ferry Hatchery. These yearling fish were tagged on January 28-30.
- Approximately 328,000 eggs to rear surrogate fish for the transportation study were moved from Lyons Ferry Hatchery to Umatilla/Irrigon Hatchery for controlled rearing. Of this total, there will be about 229,600 surrogate fish allocated for the Snake River and 98,400 surrogate fish for the Clearwater River. All of these fish will be moved to Dworshak National Fish Hatchery (DNFH) around April 7 for final rearing to surrogate size for the study. Beginning mid-May to early June, a tagging contractor will PIT-tag the Snake River surrogate releases at DNFH. Beginning mid-June to early July, the tagging contractor will PIT-tag Clearwater River surrogate releases at DNFH.
- Beginning mid-April to early May, approximately 250,000 production subyearling fall Chinook salmon will be PIT-tagged at Lyons Ferry Hatchery and Irrigon/Umatilla Hatchery. Specific production groups and numbers of fish to be tagged in each group are outlined in a Snake River Fall Chinook Production Allocation table.

- The Corps-Walla Walla District staff is currently working to award a contract to the Nez Perce Tribe to PIT-tag natural Clearwater River fall Chinook salmon. The Corps anticipates this contract will be awarded by April 1, with the expectation of being able to PIT-tag up to 8,000 natural Clearwater River fall Chinook salmon using the 12.5mm PIT-tag, as well as tag up to 10,000 smaller fish using the 8.5mm PIT-tag.
- The Corps-Walla Walla District staff is prepared to provide funding to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at DNFH to PIT-tag up to 10,000 natural Snake River fall Chinook salmon using the 12.5mm PIT-tag, as well as tag up to 10,000 smaller fish using the 8.5mm PIT-tag.
- A Snake River fall Chinook study workshop in 2008 to discuss data analysis from the study has not yet been scheduled.
- Finally, the Corps has not heard back from *U.S. v Oregon* parties if research fish for this study will be moved higher in the priority table in 2009 and out-years. However, a Snake River fall Chinook salmon coordination meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2008, in Lewiston, Idaho. One of the topics on the agenda is to discuss the status of the *U.S. v Oregon* production priority table as it relates to future implementation of the Corps' fall Chinook transport study, e.g., consideration of changing the priority level of the research fish needed for the study.

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