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November 27, 2012

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Fish and Wildlife Committee members

**FROM:** Tony Grover, Fish and Wildlife Division Director

**SUBJECT:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service discussion of hatchery assessments and reform by Dr. Don Campton, Doug Olson and Mark Bagdovitz, all with the USF&WS.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) conducted a five-year, science-based review of 24 federally-owned salmon hatcheries in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, 2005-2010. The review examined 53 hatchery programs for Pacific salmon and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus* sp.). The goal of these reviews was to ensure that Service hatcheries operate in accordance with the best scientific information available and contribute to sustainable fisheries and the conservation of naturally-spawning populations of salmon, steelhead, and other aquatic species.

The listing of salmon and steelhead populations under the ESA, changing management priorities resulting from those listings, and questions regarding the effects of hatcheries on natural populations resulted in a surge of scientific research. This research dramatically increased our understanding of the biology of salmon and steelhead and provided increased awareness of the genetic and ecological risks posed by hatchery-origin fish to natural populations (primarily through interbreeding, competition, and related factors). At the same time, scientists and managers began to contemplate how hatcheries could contribute to the conservation and recovery of ESA-listed populations while continuing to meet their traditional role of providing fish for harvest. Conflicts between harvest and conservation goals, and new scientific information regarding the biological risks posed by hatcheries, motivated hatchery reform efforts in the Pacific Northwest.

In 2004, the Service concluded that its 12 National Fish Hatcheries in the Columbia River basin should undergo an internal hatchery review similar to the HSRG's efforts in Puget Sound and coastal Washington. Regional priorities were changing as recovery plans were being developed for ESA-listed populations. The need also existed to respond to increasing public scrutiny of the Service's hatchery programs and the potential impacts or risks those programs pose to natural fish populations. The Service viewed an internal review as the first step for ensuring that:

- Federal hatchery programs are operated in accordance with best available science;
- Programs are consistent with ESA-protection and recovery plans; and
- Programs are responsive to new scientific information and changing regional priorities.

The Service appointed a *Hatchery Review Working Group* (HRWG) in November, 2004. The HRWG was tasked with proposing a process for reviewing all National Fish Hatcheries in the Columbia River Basin. The HRWG proposed a process modeled after the HSRG reviews in Puget Sound and coastal Washington.

The HRWG first adopted, with slight modification, the principles and goals of the HSRG review process, as presented below.

***Principles of the Service review process:***

1. Every hatchery stock and program must have well-defined goals described in terms of desired benefits and purposes (e.g., harvest, conservation, research, education);
2. Hatchery programs must be scientifically defensible; and
3. Hatchery programs must respond adaptively to new information.

***4 Goals of the Service review process:***

1. Establish the scientific foundations for National Fish Hatcheries and cooperative programs;
2. Conserve genetic resources for salmonid species;
3. Assist with the recovery of naturally spawning populations;
4. Provide for sustainable fisheries;
5. Conduct scientific research; and
6. Improve quality and cost-effectiveness of hatchery programs.

The HRWG provided 15 recommendations for reviewing federal hatcheries in the Columbia River Basin. Among the first tier recommendations, the HRWG recommended (a) the formation of a Hatchery Review Team composed of Service personnel with complementary expertise and (b) inclusion of state-operated hatcheries of the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan (LSRCP) with the review of all National Fish Hatcheries (NFH) in the Columbia River Basin.