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NW Fishletter #319, June 28, 2013

[4] Model Being Developed To Gauge Fish-Tagging Costs

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Independent Economics Analysis Board has developed a **model** that tries to measure costs of using four different types of fish tags, and the results are very complicated, said Oregon State University economist and IEAB member Bill Jaeger at the council's June 12 meeting.

The project is part of the work of the region's fish-tagging forum that is looking at ways to improve costs and benefits of the Columbia Basin's fish-tagging efforts, which cost BPA about \$58 million last year.

Jaeger, who did most of the work to develop the model, cautioned that there were limits to what it could do because of the qualitative differences in the different tagging systems. Four different types of tags were reviewed-- coded-wire tags, used mainly for harvest studies; PIT tags, used widely for juvenile survival studies and adult return rates; and two types of genetic markers, Population Based Tagging (PBT) and Genetic Stock Identification (GSI).

Jaeger said the world of tagging, sampling and recovering fish tags varies widely from one group to the next, with many spillovers, interconnections and shared benefits. The costs to fulfill detection requirements vary greatly across release sites, species, and detection/recovery locations.

He produced a table that showed his model results estimating the incremental cost for increasing detections by just one fish for different species. For spring Chinook, the cost ranged from \$31 for juvenile spring Chinook tagged at Wenatchee and detected at Bonneville, to \$443 for adult spring Chinook tagged at Umatilla and detected at Rock Island.

The cost to increase detection at Bonneville by one juvenile steelhead from the Lower Snake was \$36, while increasing adult detections at Little Goose Dam by one more steelhead from the Lower Snake was estimated to cost \$441.

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Jaeger's model also pegged costs for increasing CWT recovery by one tag as well. For fall Chinook tagged in the lower Columbia caught in the Oregon coastal fishery that was estimated at \$2,378; for a spring/summer Chinook tagged in the Methow River and caught off the Washington coast, it amounted to \$3,682. But it would only cost \$335 for one more recovery if that occurred in the Alaska fishery.

What is causing that big discrepancy in some costs? One factor may be the large sampling effort needed in certain fisheries where some CWT stocks have such low prevalence, said Jaeger.

Jaeger said CWT costs are lower than genetic tags for harvest data under most conditions, given current costs, but the reverse may be true in a "non-mixed" fishery. He said the model can be refined to get at questions of prioritizing tagging efforts from different subbasins, but first, the modelers must be assured that it truly reflects fish biology. That might mean a review by the council's independent science advisory board.

The council agreed to put the model out for public comment until July 26. **-B. R.**

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a model

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