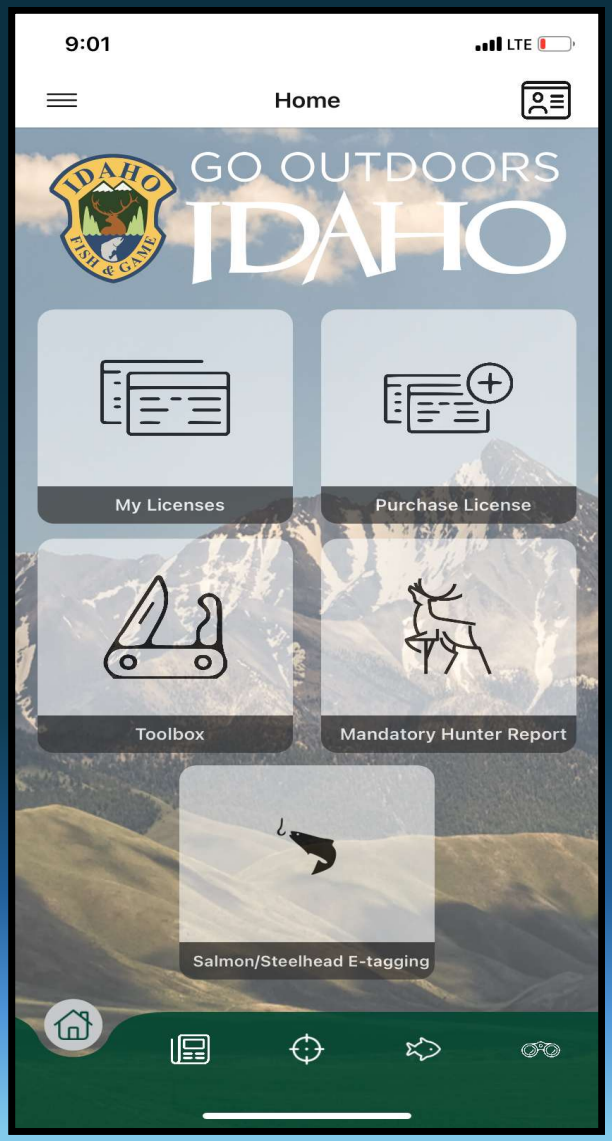
Use of E-reporting and and E-creels for Managing Anadromous Fisheries in Idaho

Chris Sullivan

2025 Pacific Coast Steelhead Management Meeting

Presentation Outline

- Background
- Electronic Permit Implementation
- Electronic Creel Implementation
- Challenges
- Looking to the Future



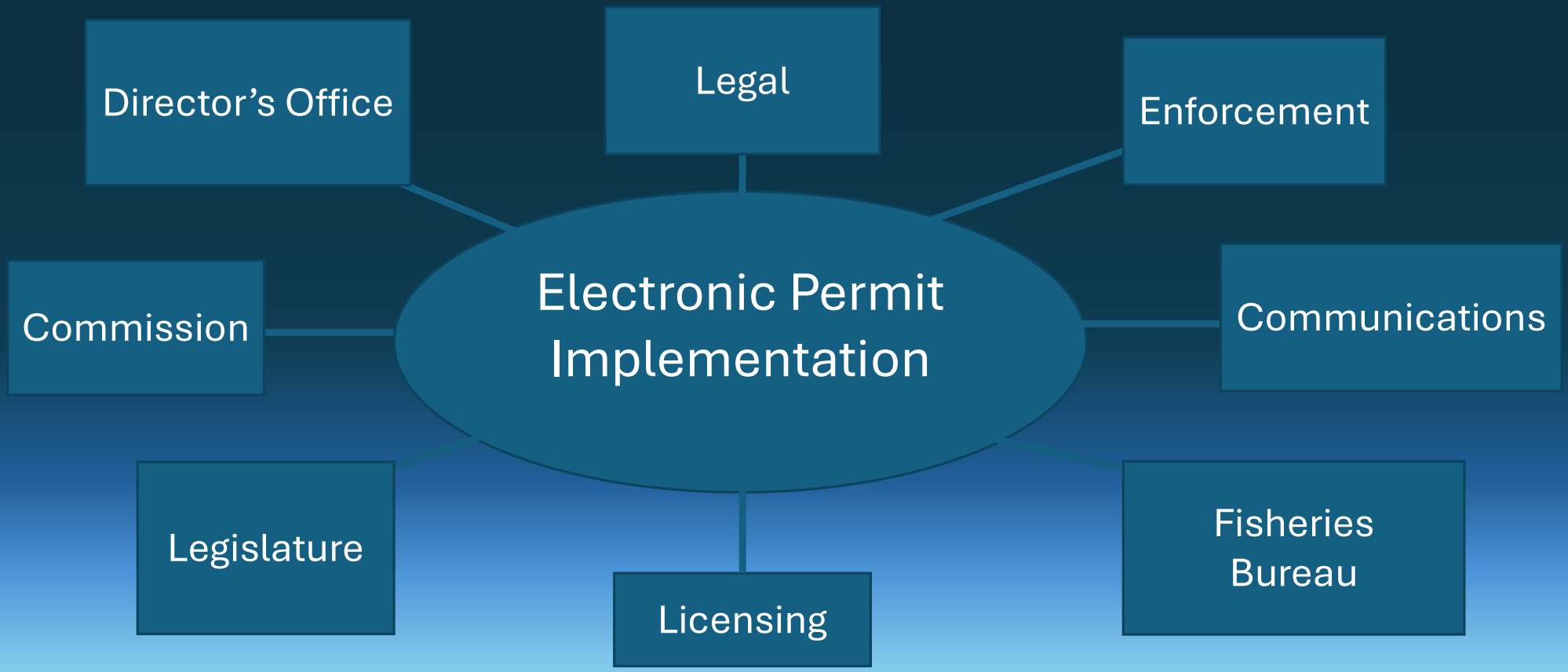
Background – Idaho Anadromous Fisheries

- Steelhead and Salmon fisheries operate on over 550 miles of river
- Steelhead fisheries open July – May
- Chinook fisheries open April – October
- Coho fisheries open September – December
- Traditional creel surveys = lots of time and money

Implementation – electronic permits (E-tagging)

- 2020-2021 – IDFG began discussions to implement e-tagging
- Spring 2023 – IDFG Electronic Permit Workgroup Formed

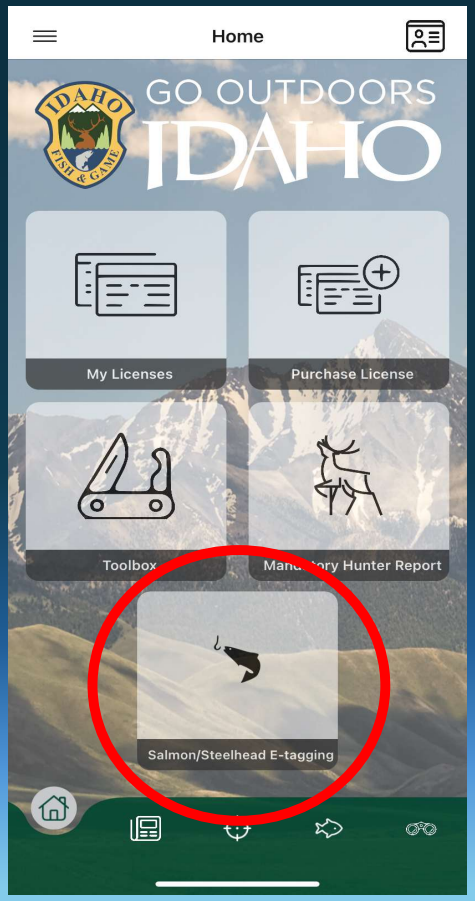
Implementation – electronic permits (E-tagging)



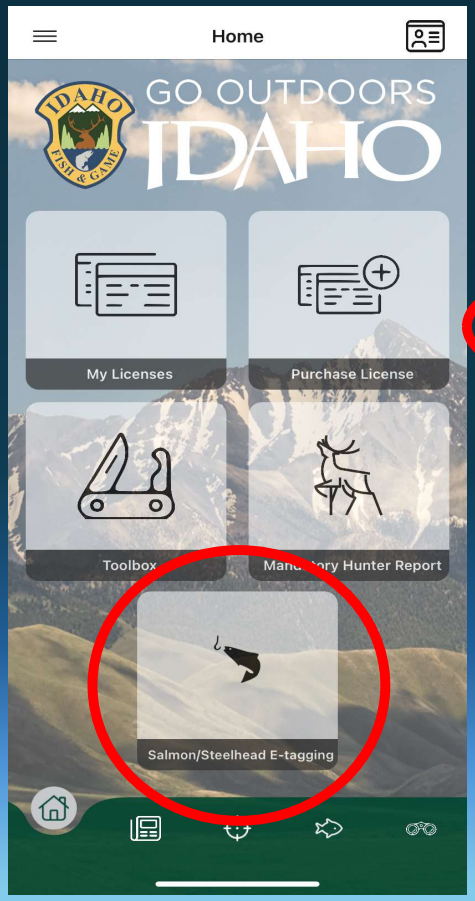
Implementation – electronic permits (E-tagging)

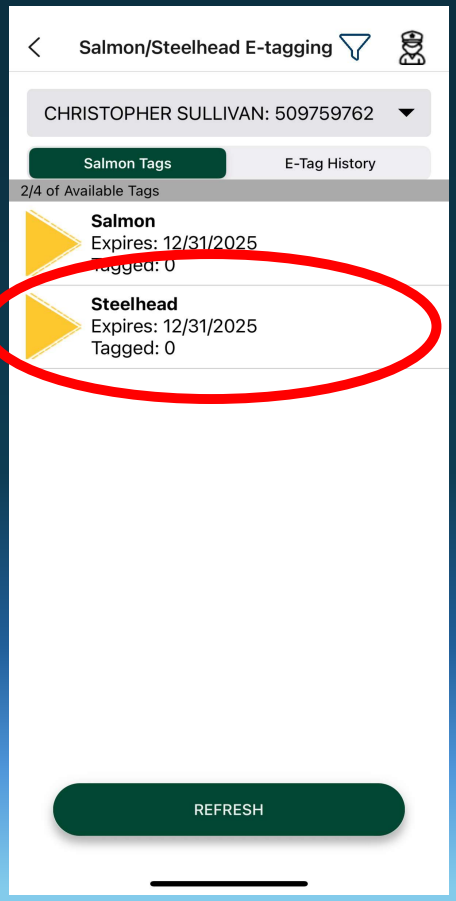
- April 1, 2024 - Electronic salmon and steelhead permits available
- GO OUTDOORS IDAHO app to validate permit on smartphone
- E-tagging implemented for several reasons:
  - Angler convenience
  - Fishery management benefits
    - monitoring efficiencies
    - harvest estimation accuracy

Electronic Steelhead Permit



Electronic Steelhead Permit





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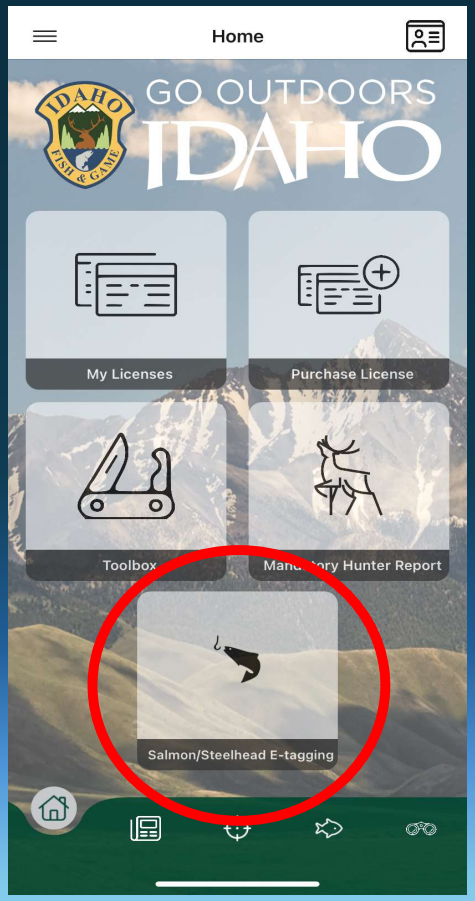
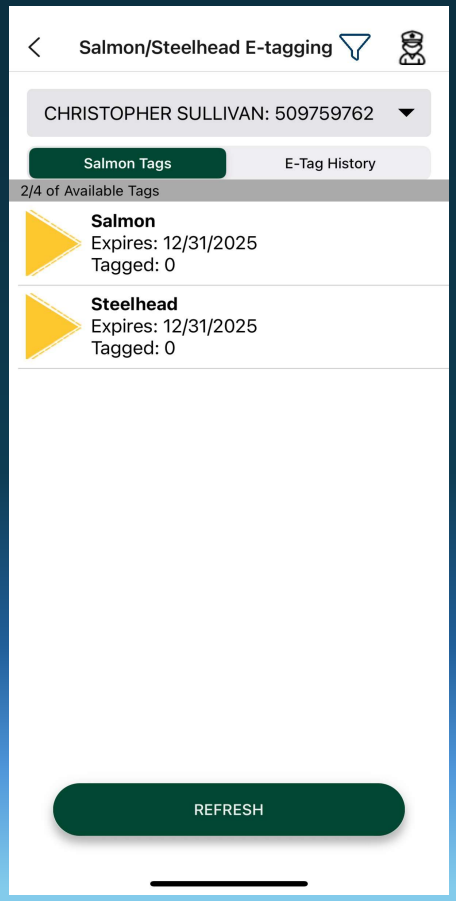
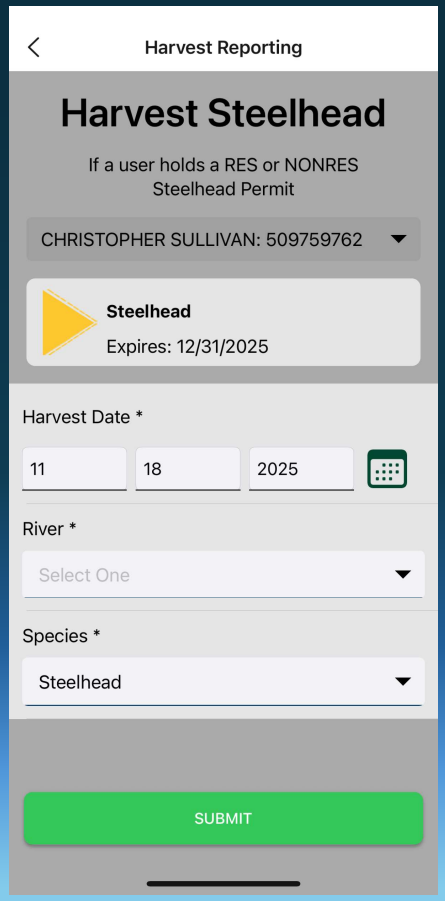
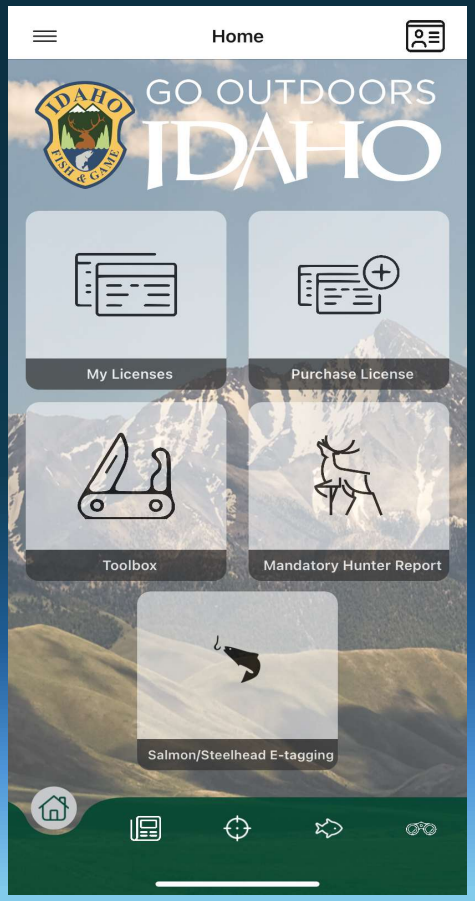
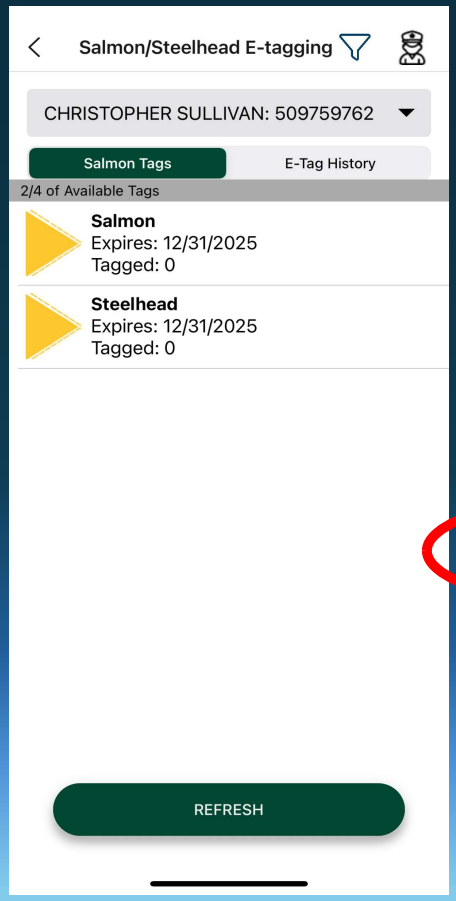


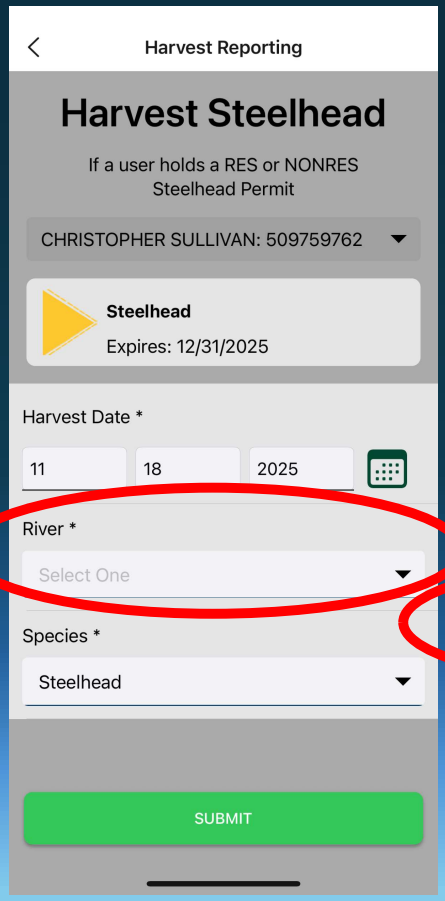


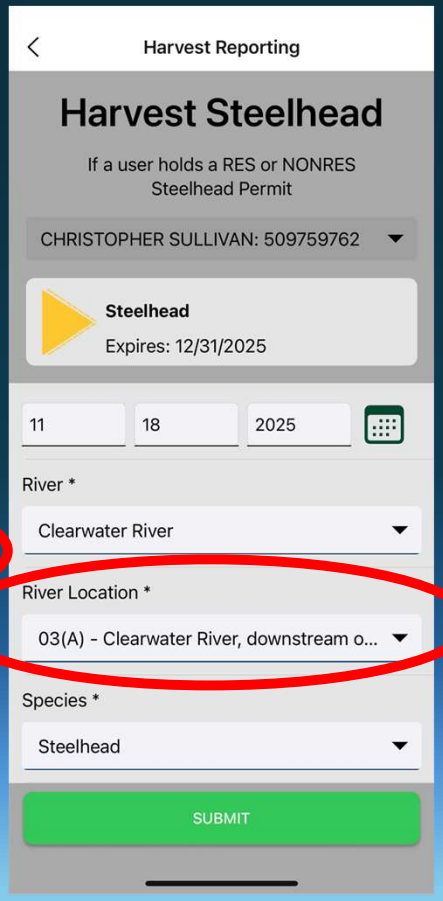


Electronic Steelhead Permit

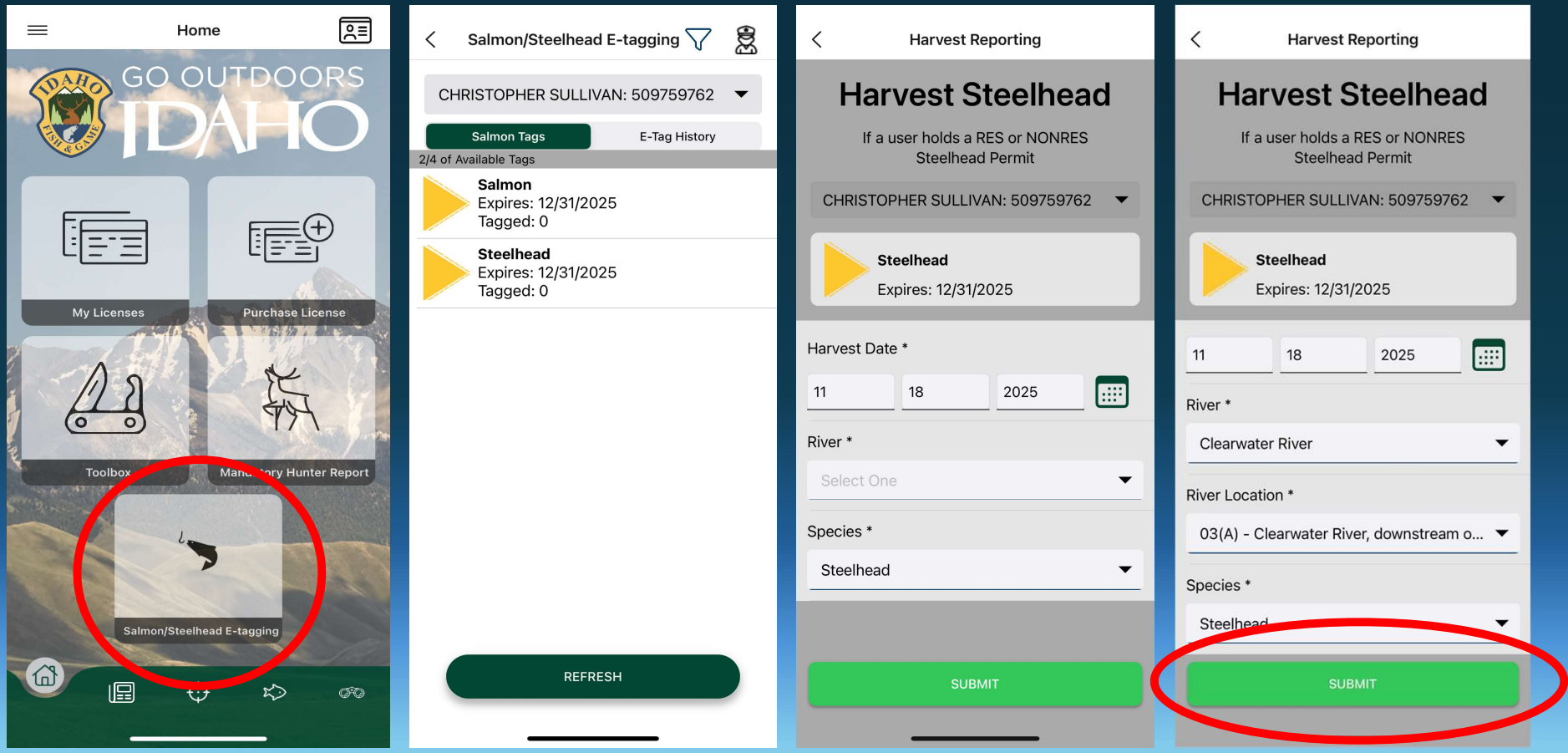








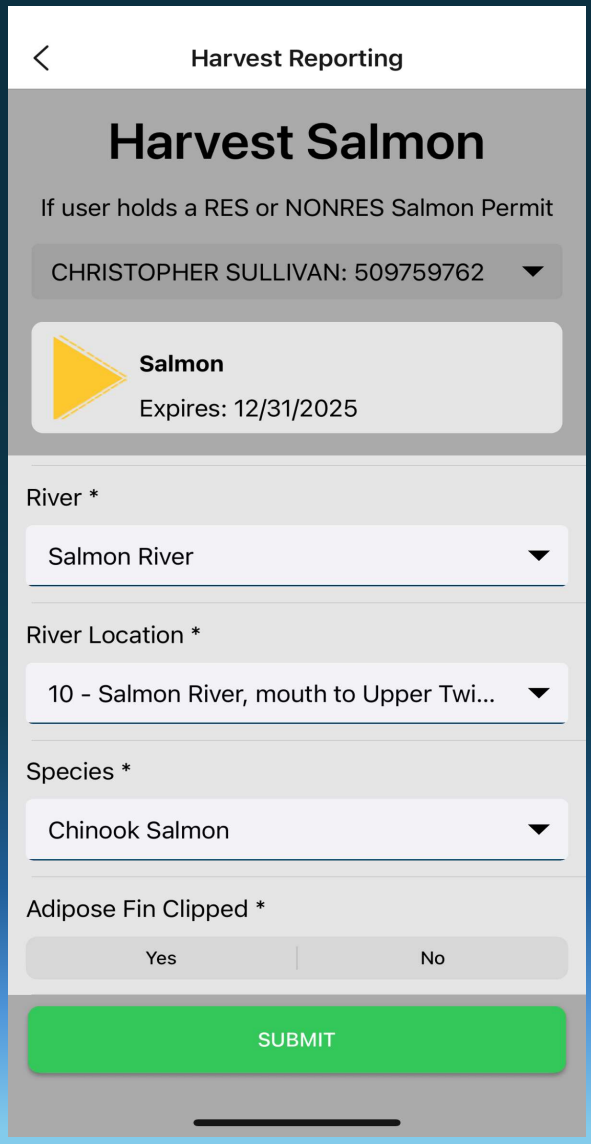
Electronic Steelhead Permit



Electronic Salmon Permit

Choose Chinook or Coho

Choose Clip Status



Rules and Regs Changes – Paper Permits

Sample Salmon Permit

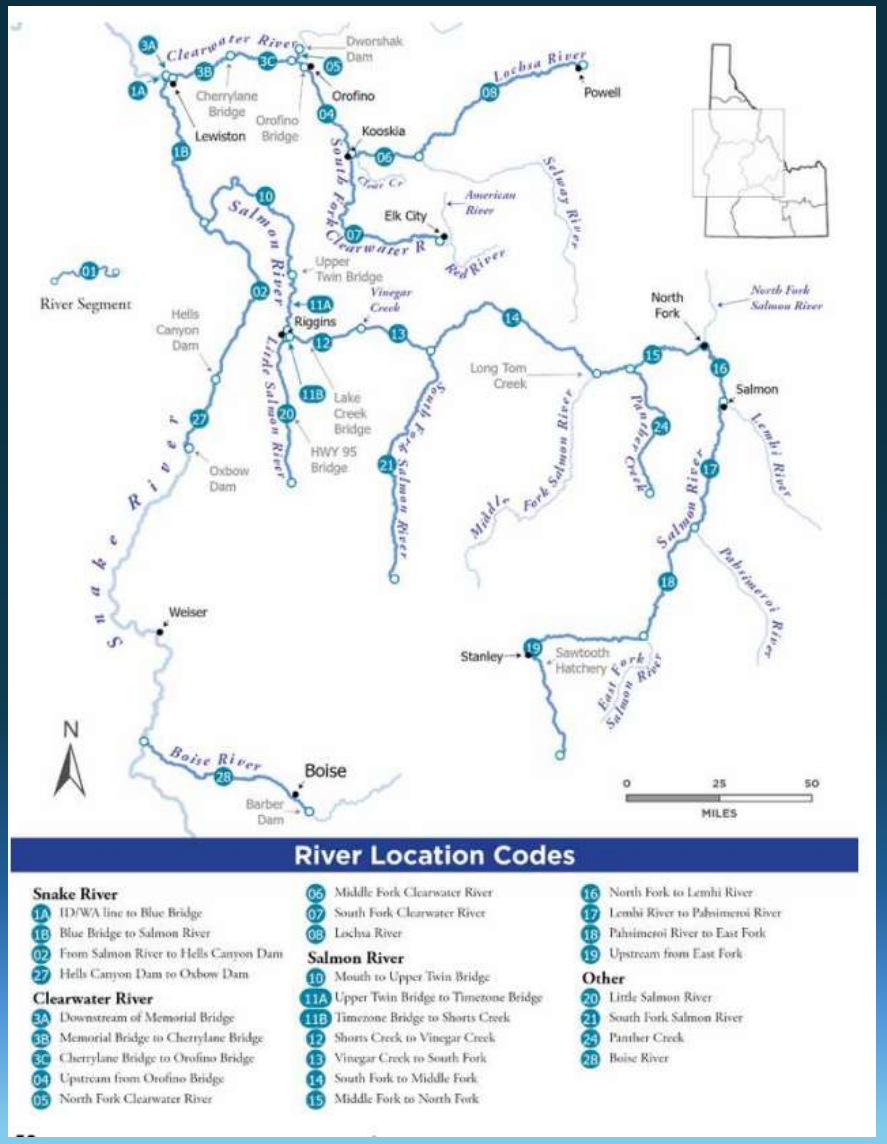
Fish	Month / Day	River Location Code	Chinook	Coho	Adipose Fin Clipped?
1			☐	☐	☐ Yes ☐ No
2			☐	☐	☐ Yes ☐ No
3			☐	☐	☐ Yes ☐ No

Sample Steelhead Permit

Fish	Month / Day	Location Code	Month / Day	Location Code	Fish
1					21
2					22
3					23

Rules and Regs Changes

- Change Administrative Code
- Anglers no longer required to notch permits when a fish is harvested
- Anglers required to indicate species and ad clip status for salmon permits
- Needed new river location codes to accommodate harvest estimation



Rules and Regs Changes

Snake River

- 1A ID/WA line to Blue Bridge
- 1B Blue Bridge to Salmon River
- 02 From Salmon River to Hells Canyon Dam
- 27 Hells Canyon Dam to Oxbow Dam

Clearwater River

- 3A Downstream of Memorial Bridge
- 3B Memorial Bridge to Cherrylane Bridge
- 3C Cherrylane Bridge to Orofino Bridge
- 04 Upstream from Orofino Bridge
- 05 North Fork Clearwater River
- 06 Middle Fork Clearwater River
- 07 South Fork Clearwater River
- 08 Lochsa River

Salmon River

- 10 Mouth to Upper Twin Bridge
- 11A Upper Twin Bridge to Timezone Bridge
- 11B Timezone Bridge to Shorts Creek
- 12 Shorts Creek to Vinegar Creek
- 13 Vinegar Creek to South Fork
- 14 South Fork to Middle Fork
- 15 Middle Fork to North Fork

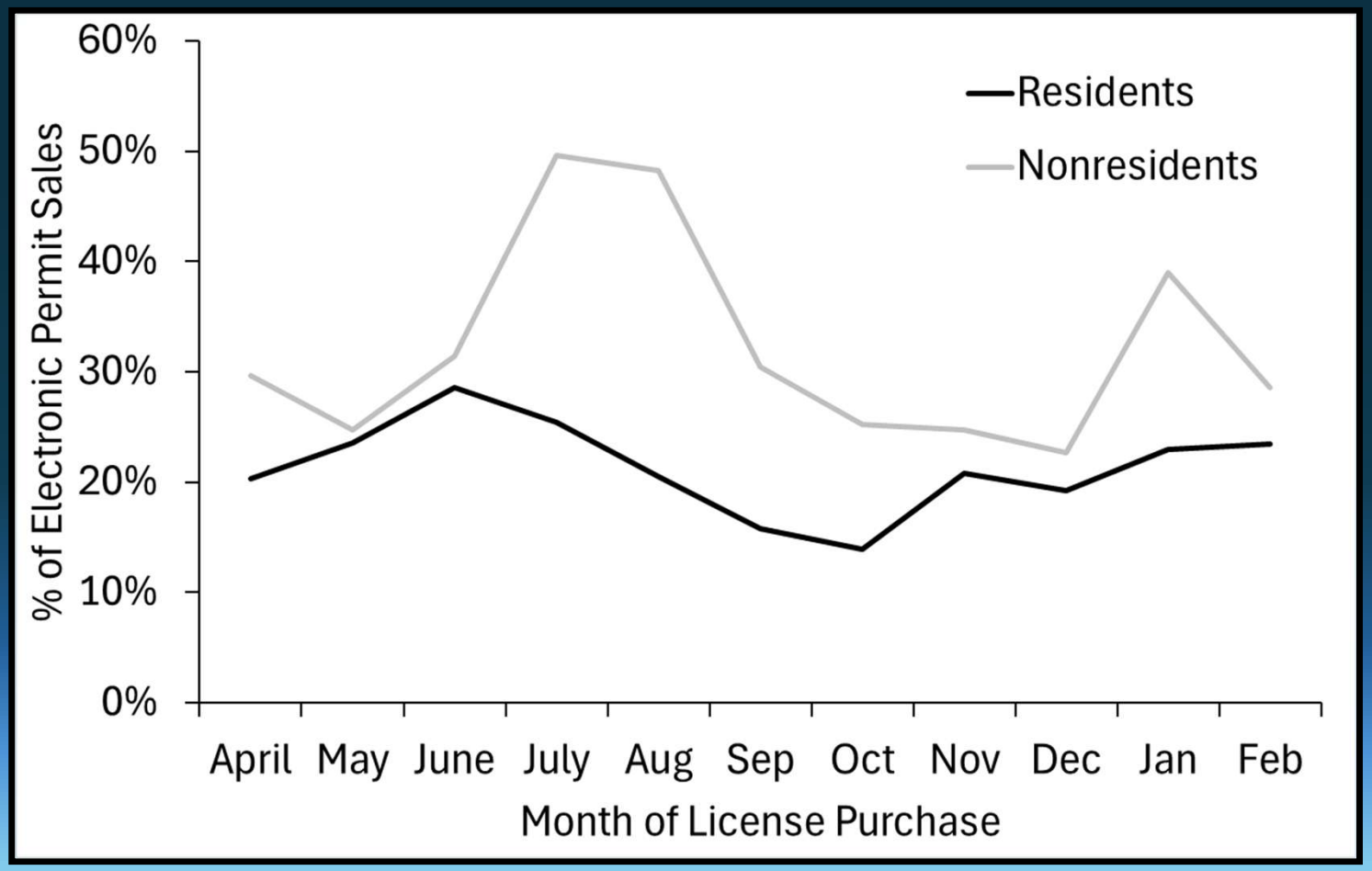
- Needed new river location codes to accommodate harvest estimation

Implementation – electronic creel

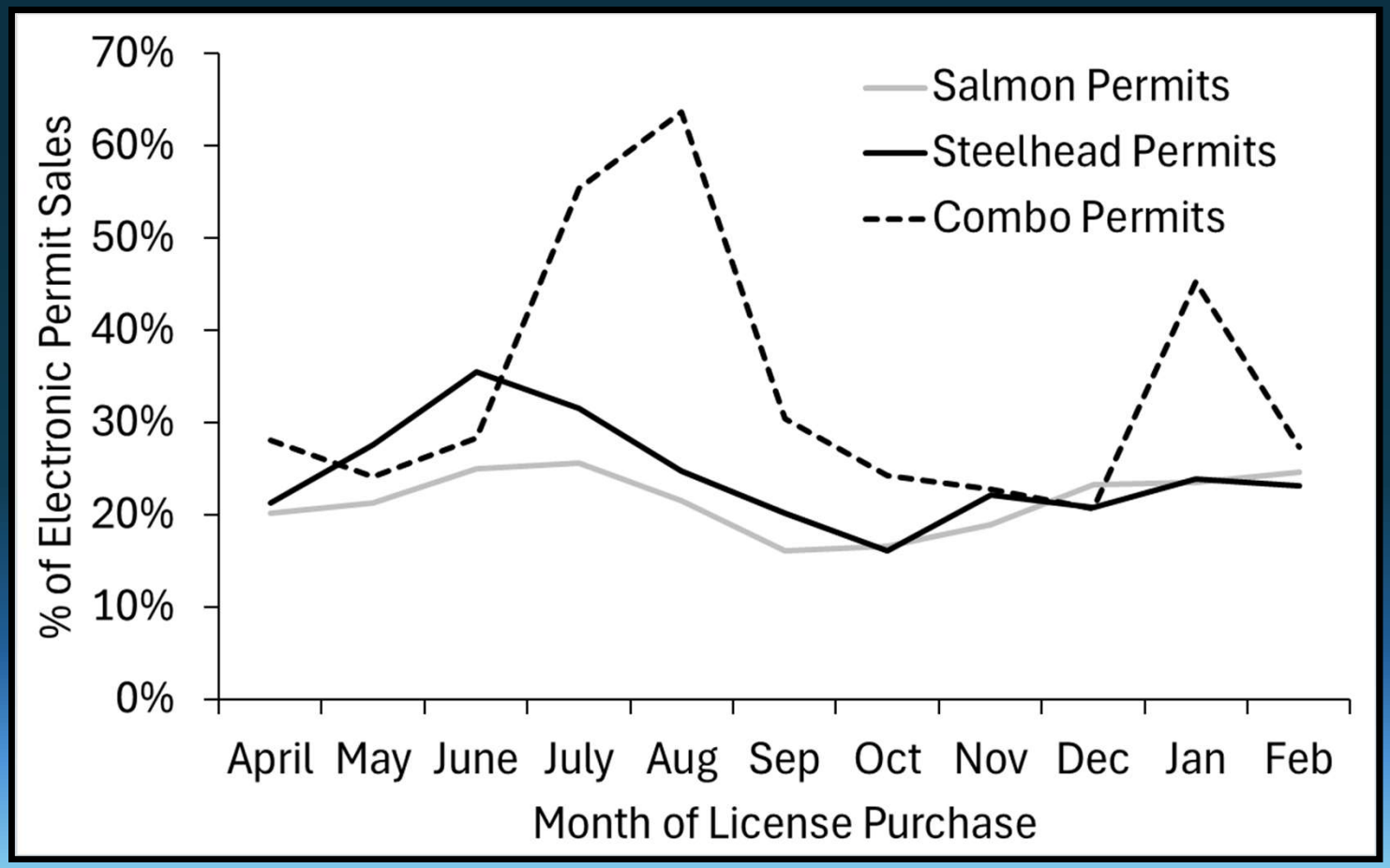
- Mark-recapture where e-tagged fish are “marked” and “recaptured” by creel clerks
- Tested during spring/summer Chinook fisheries in 2024
- Implemented for most Chinook fisheries for 2025 in-season management
- Used in spring 2025 steelhead fisheries
  - Replaced post-season phone/mail survey
- Use creel data to estimate effort, C&R of marked and unmarked fish

Permit Sales and Harvest Data

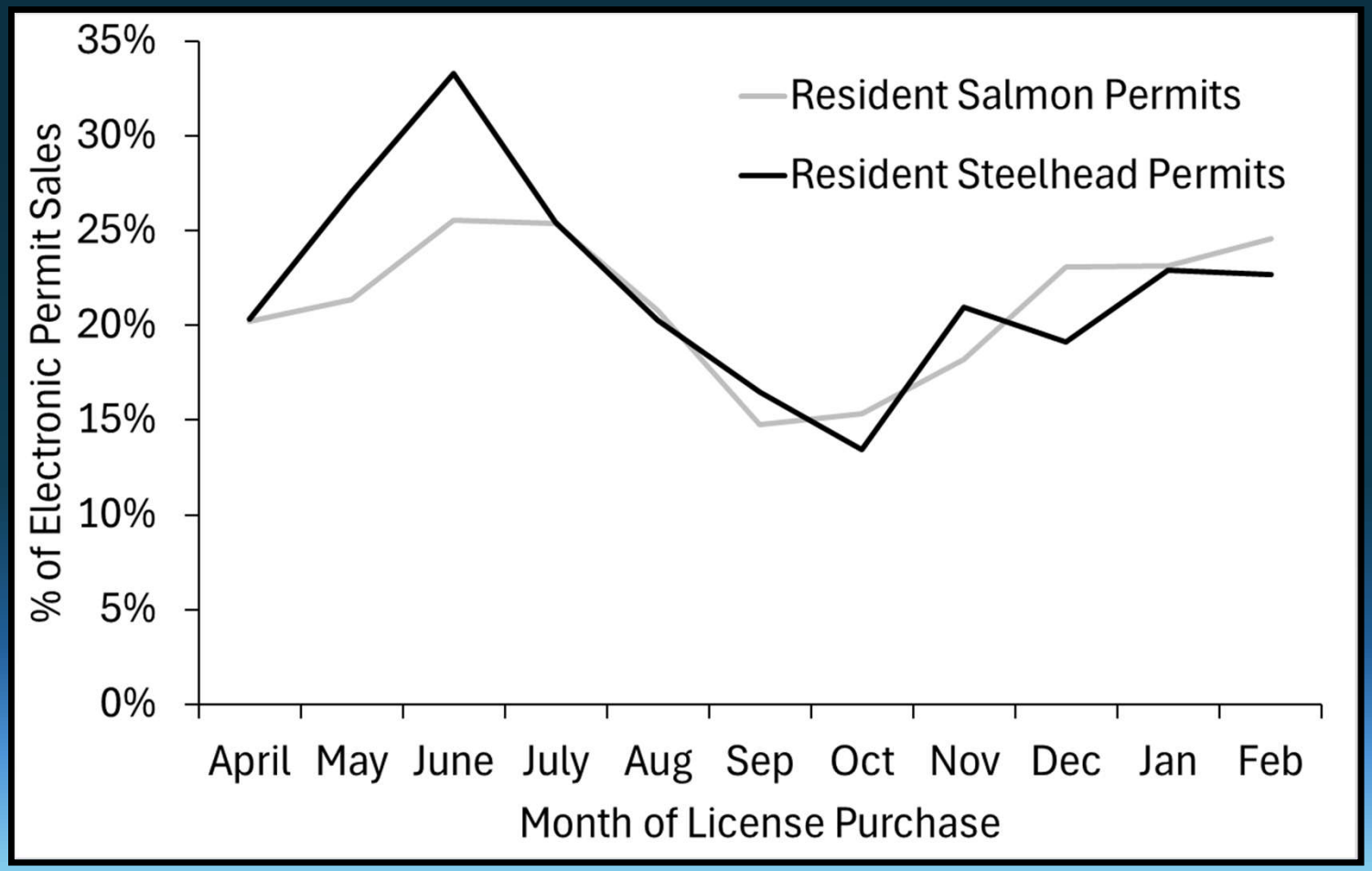
Permit sales stats – Residents vs Nonresidents



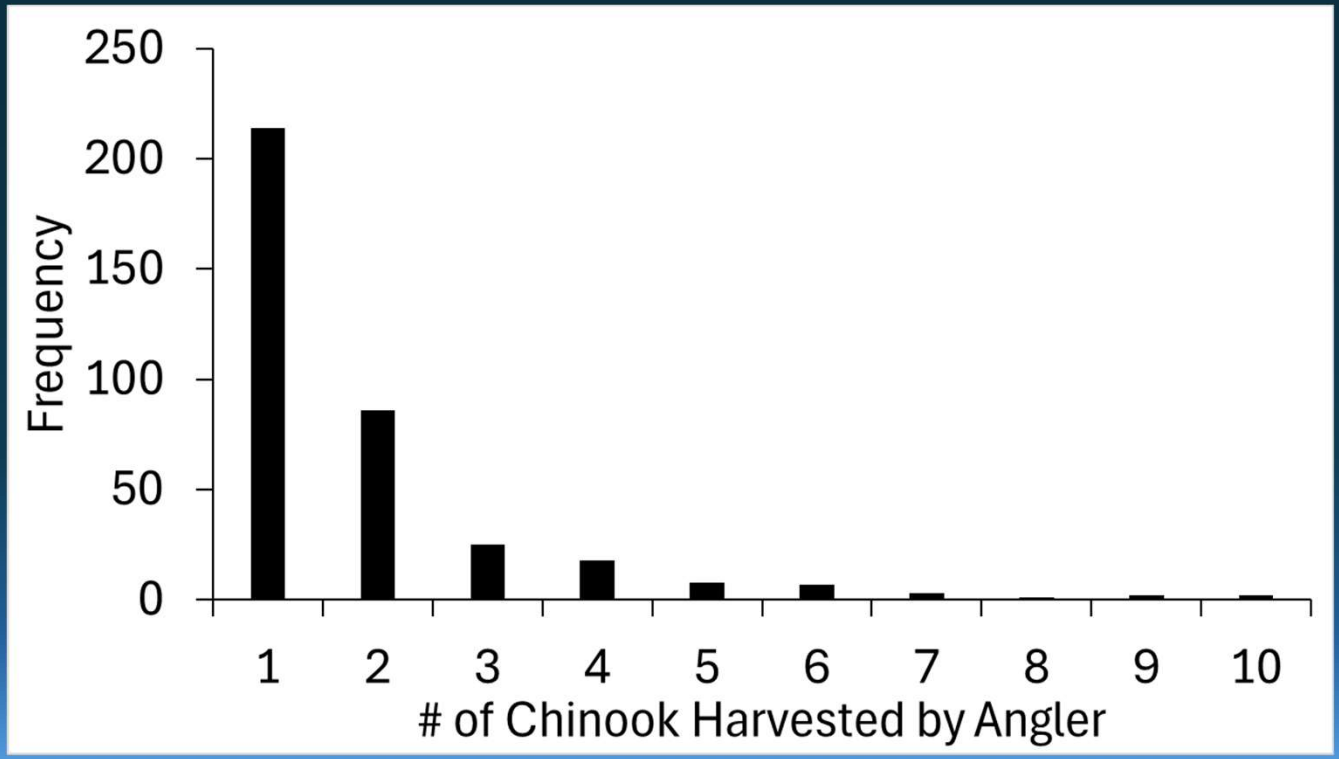
Permit sales stats by species



Permit sales stats for residents by species

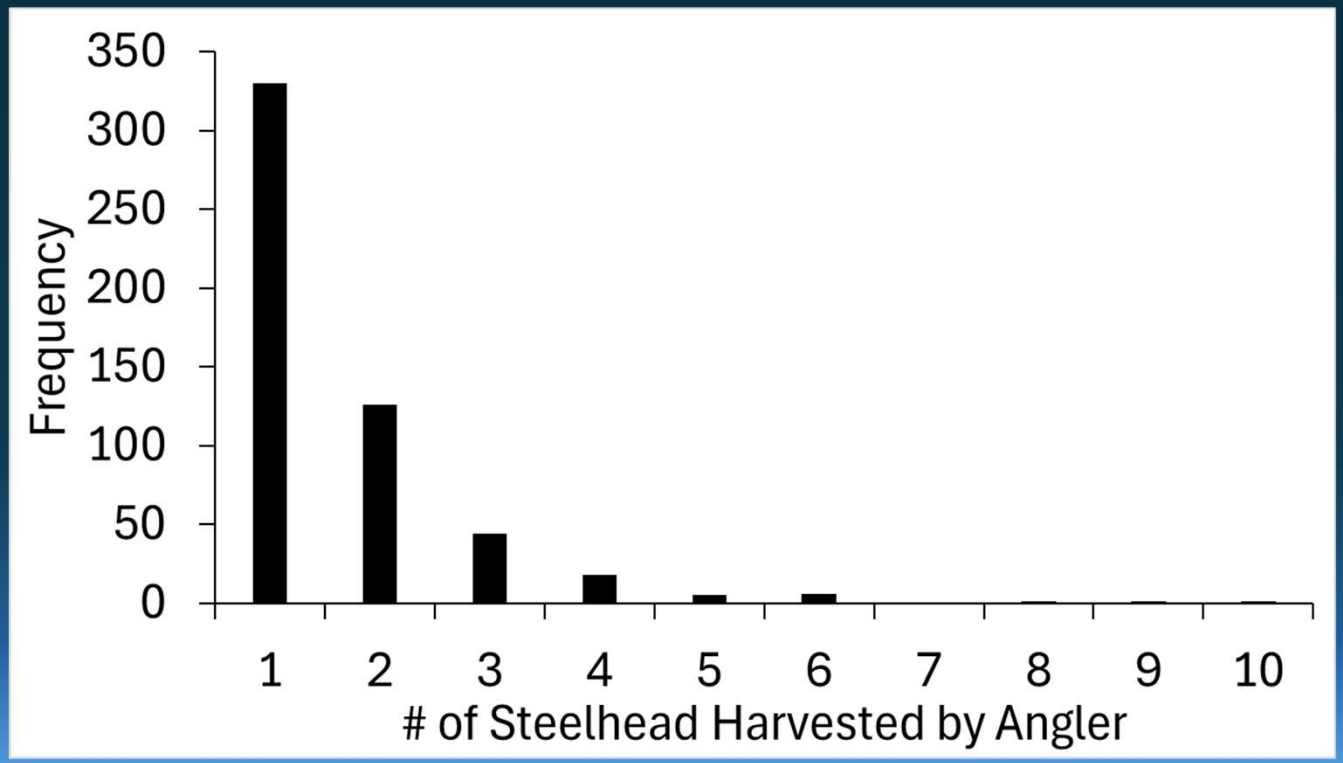


Number of fish harvested per angler - Chinook



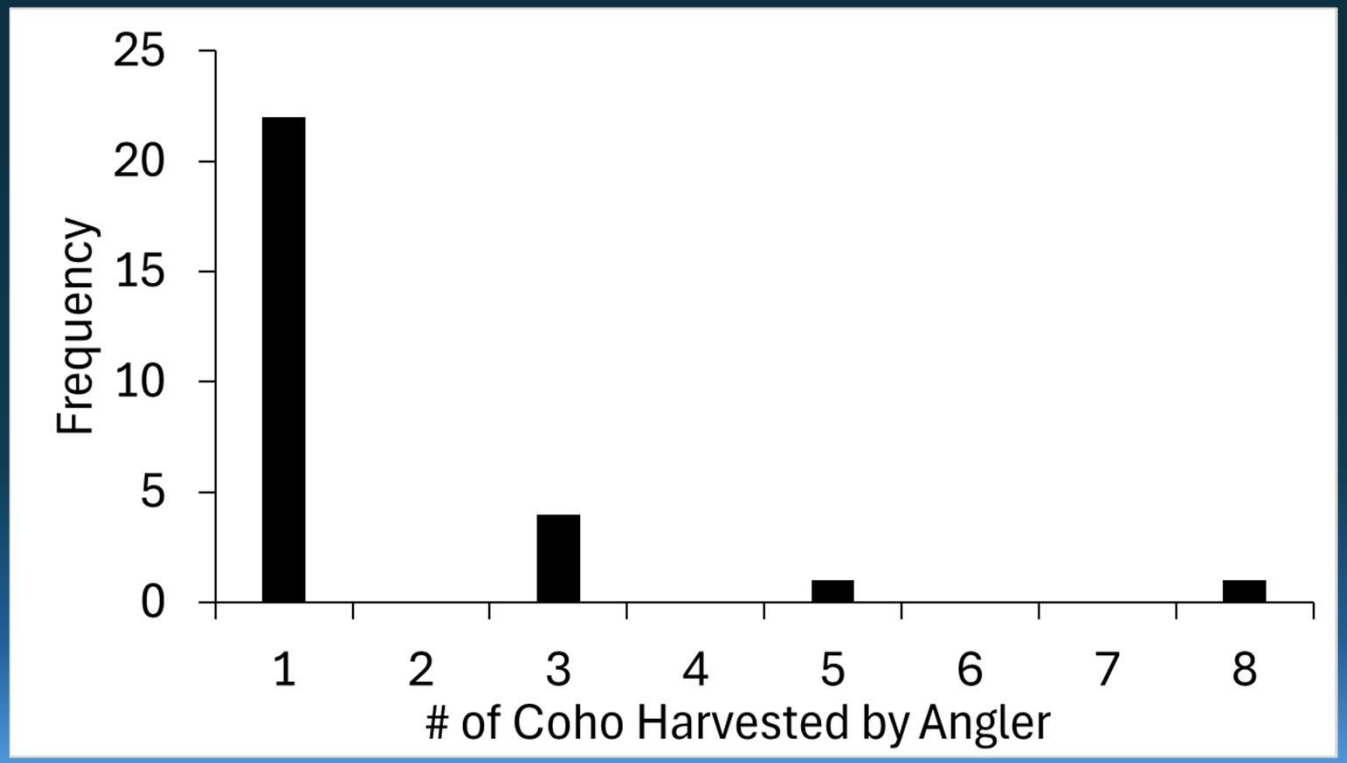
- 366 anglers harvested 683 Chinook
- 96% harvested less than 5 adults
- 2 anglers kept a season limit (10 fish)

Number of fish harvested per angler - Steelhead



- 533 anglers harvested 874 Steelhead
- 98% harvested less than 5 adults
- 1 Angler kept 10 steelhead, all in April in the Upper Salmon R

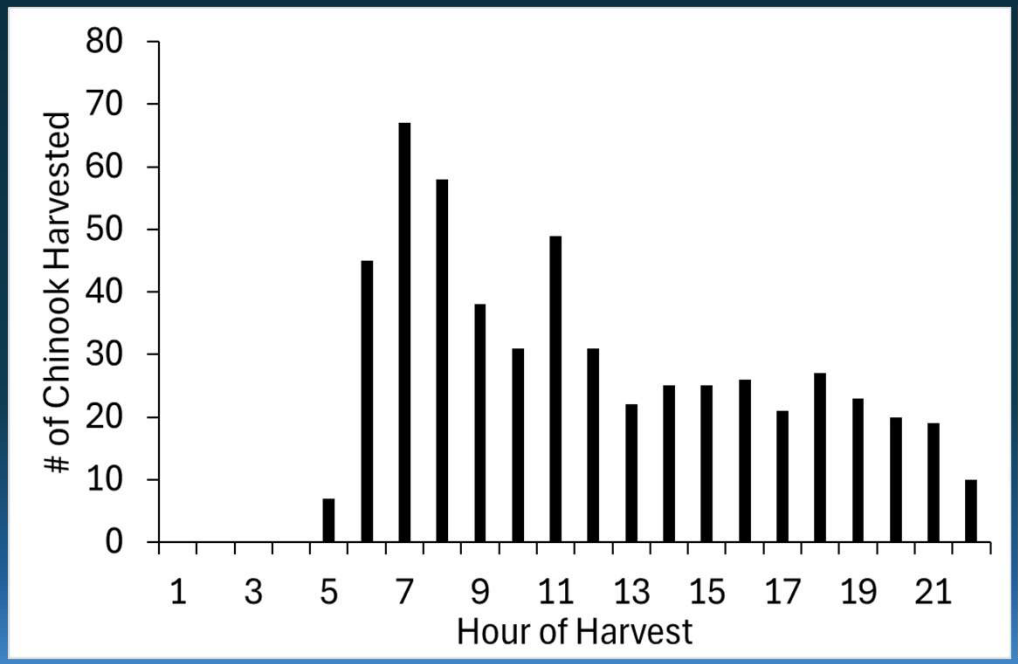
Number of fish harvested per angler - Coho



- 28 anglers harvested 47 Coho
- 1 angler with 8 Coho, all caught before 8:00am

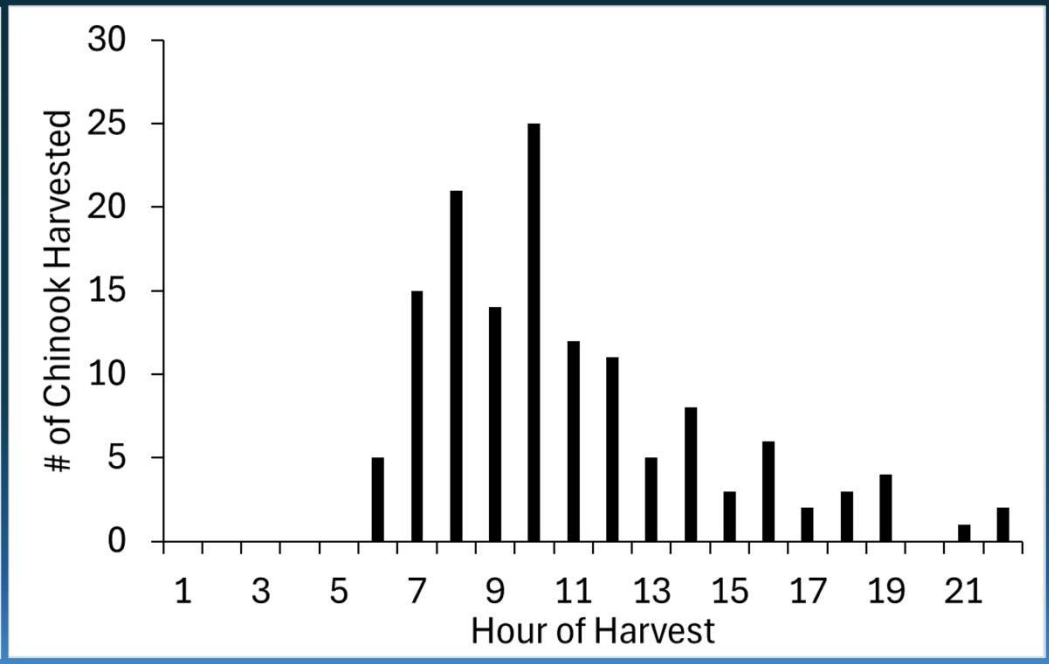
Time when fish are harvested - Chinook

Spring/Summer



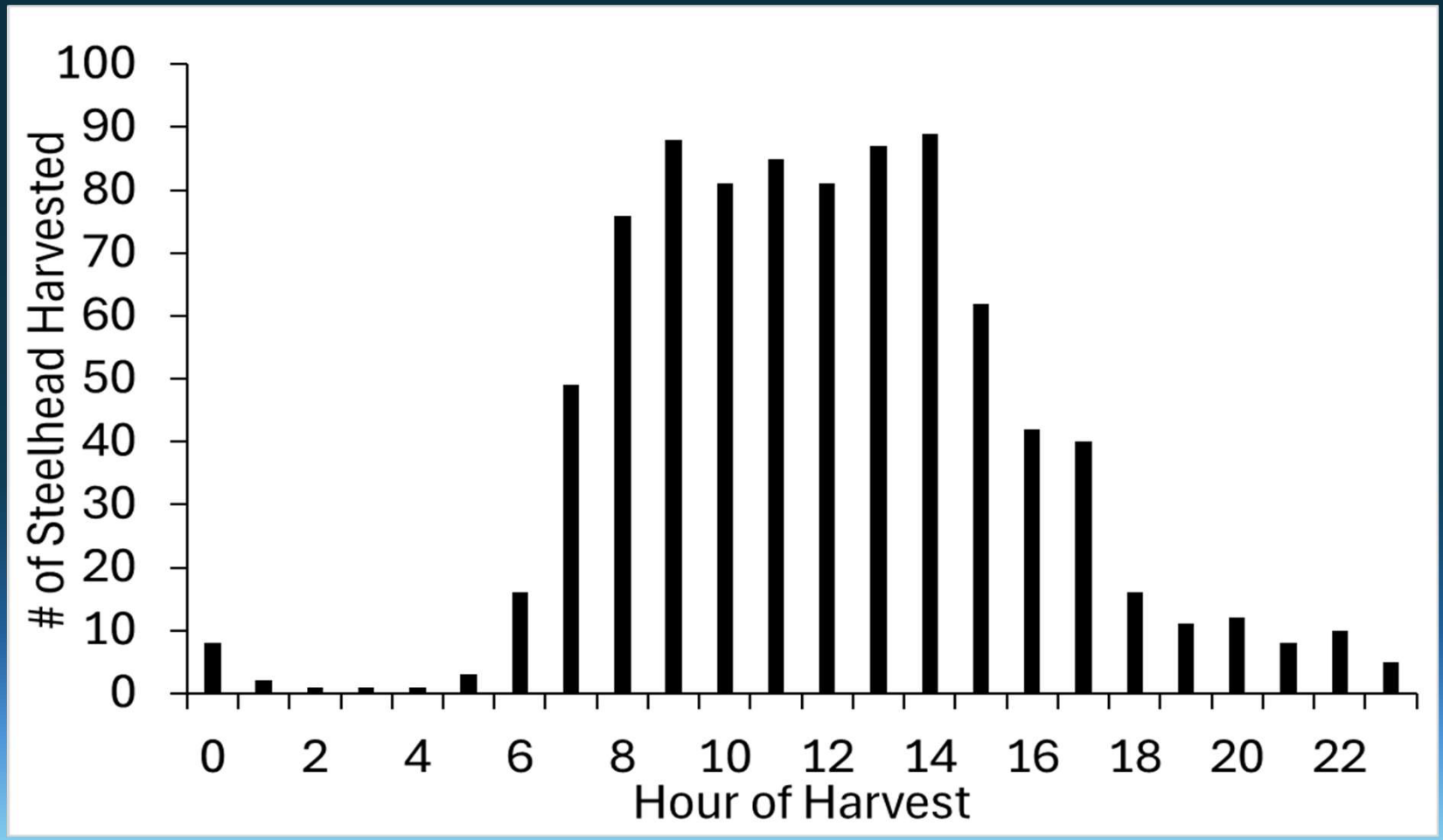
60% of harvest occurred before noon

Fall



75% of harvest occurred before noon

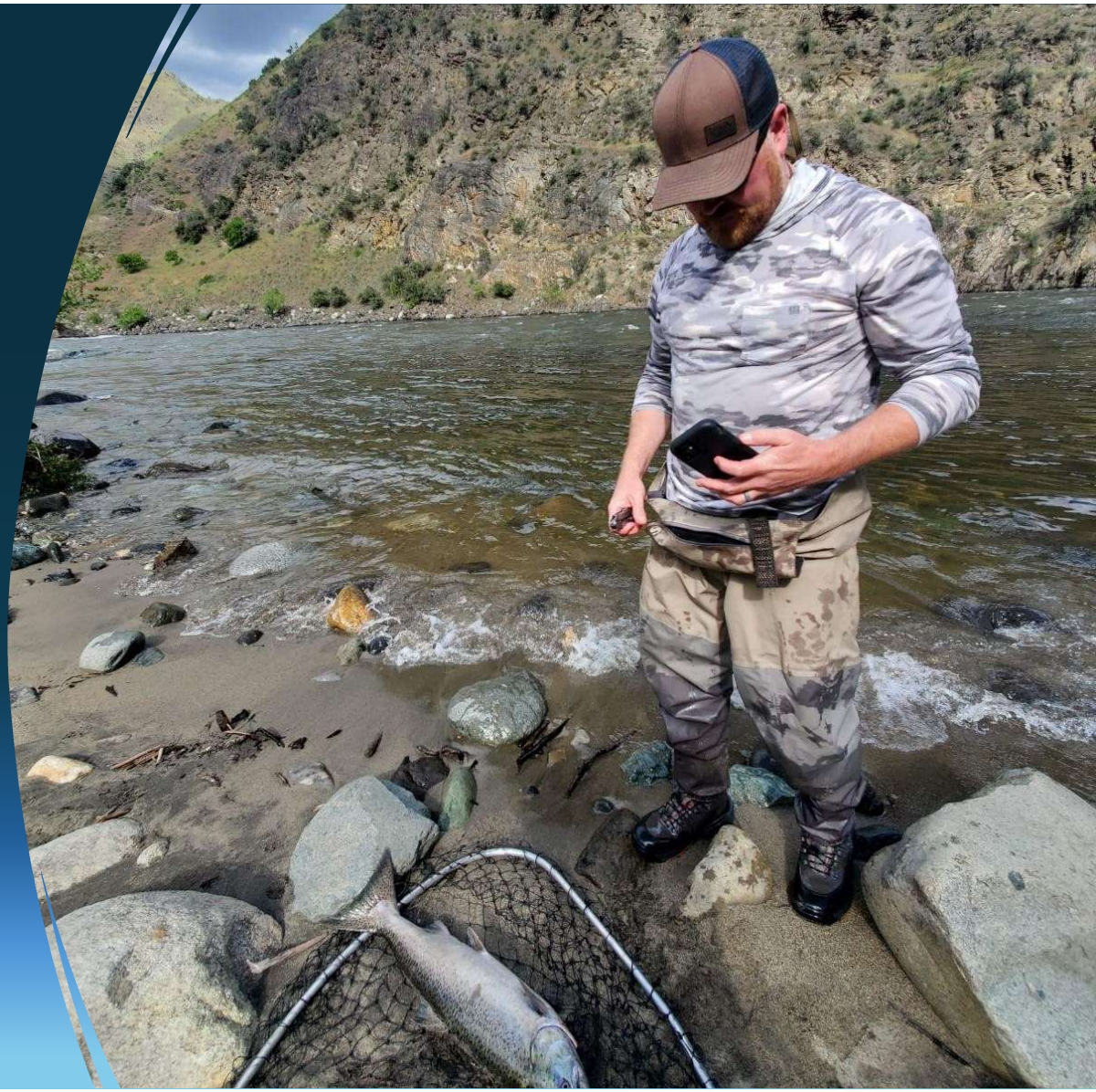
Time when fish are harvested - Steelhead



Challenges

- Remote locations
- Jack-only fisheries
- Anglers not entering correct information
- Low e-tag participation fisheries

Looking to the future

- Continue to make enhancements on the App
- Continue outreach efforts with the public to increase participation
- Incorporate delayed reporting into in-season e-creel model

Questions?