

## **Idaho -- Abstract of the 2021 Idaho stock status talk for Steelhead Managers Workshop**

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The decline of the abundance of Snake River steelhead led to their listing as threatened in October 1997, pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act. Development of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS), particularly the four dams and reservoirs on the Lower Snake River, is considered to be the primary factor in the decline of Snake River steelhead. About 60% of the historical steelhead habitat in Idaho is still available, primarily in the Salmon and Clearwater river drainages. About 30% of Idaho's existing steelhead habitat is included within designated wilderness or wild and scenic river corridors. There is a mix of natural and hatchery steelhead production strategies in Idaho, ranging from wild refugia to large-scale hatchery programs to provide harvest opportunities. Areas managed for wild steelhead include the Lochsa and the Selway river drainages of the Clearwater River, the Middle Fork and South Fork drainages of the Salmon River, Rapid River, tributaries of the Salmon River downstream of the MF Salmon River, and tributaries of the Clearwater River downstream of the SF Clearwater.

IDFG genotypes all hatchery steelhead broodstock and using Parental Based Tagging (PBT) techniques the progeny can be identified. Genetic Stock Identification (GSI) techniques can classify wild steelhead into genetic reporting groups. Using PBT and GSI techniques the contribution of Idaho stocks can be estimated in fisheries, Bonneville Dam, and Lower Granite Dam (LGR). Abundance of wild origin steelhead passing LGR averaged 9,545 for spawn year (SY) 2018 – 2020, compared the recent 20 year average return of 25,993. The wild return at LGR in SY2019 (8,284) was the fourth lowest since the completion of the dam in 1975. Abundance of hatchery origin steelhead passing LGR averaged 53,442 for SY2018 – SY2020, compared the recent 20 year average return of 127,340. The hatchery return at LGR in SY2020 (34,410) was the fifth lowest since the completion of the dam in 1975. The hatchery migration goal of 88,100 fish at LGR has not been attained since SY2016. A portion of the wild and hatchery return at LGR are bound for rivers in Oregon and Washington.

Steelhead sport fisheries in Idaho have been curtailed with area closures and reduced bag limits in the past three years due to the low numbers of returning steelhead. Anglers can only harvest hatchery origin steelhead with a clipped adipose fin. Idaho sport fishers caught an average of 52,846 steelhead each year from 2000 to 2019. The sport harvest was 15,436 and 7,784 in the years 2018 and 2019, respectively. The projected harvest for 2020 is about 4,000 (final estimates available in summer 2021) fish.