

Pacific Coast Steelhead Meeting – Newport, OR, March 14–16, 2023

Oral Presentation Abstract

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Idaho state statute stipulates that all wildlife within the state of Idaho shall be preserved, protected, perpetuated, and managed. The Snake River steelhead Distinct Population Segment is listed as threatened and includes all wild and a component of hatchery steelhead within the Snake Basin. The Snake Basin returns are primarily summer run and historically, comprised greater than half of all the steelhead produced in the Columbia Basin. Idaho's accessible steelhead habitat contains some of the most connected, protected, high elevation spawning habitat remaining in the Columbia Basin that supports numerous self-sustaining wild populations. Additionally, Idaho has hatchery steelhead production programs that exist primarily as mitigation the loss of harvest opportunities that resulted from the construction of Snake Basin dams. Idaho hatcheries all operate under specific NOAA-approved genetic management plans and release about 8 million smolts annually, with a mitigation goal of 88,000 adults returning back to Lower Granite Dam. Annually, Idaho provides fall, winter, and spring fisheries on each return year of steelhead. Fisheries rules are set in three-year cycles and modified by IDFG's Commission as needed based on return estimates of both hatchery and natural fish. In-season estimates of adults returning over Columbia and Snake River dams guide sport and tribal harvest shares and wild impact considerations. Fisheries are intensely monitored both in- and post-season and Idaho utilizes multiple tools to monitor and control the impacts these fisheries have on wild populations. This presentation is an overview of that process.