



Oregon Water Coalition

Member Newsletter

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Snake river sockeye are speedsters in ocean swimming

Sockeye salmon are known to be hell-bent during their spawning journey up the Columbia and Snake rivers. And that rapid pace is apparently true for the young fish when they leave freshwater for their ocean sojourn.

Snake River sockeye "High Speed Harry" last year was clocked by Canadian researchers swimming north up the continental shelf at four tiny body lengths per second. That's twice as fast as the previous research speed champion, Snake River spring chinook.

To put it in perspective, if a human, say about the size of Michael Phelps, were to swim continuously at two body lengths per second, he could circumnavigate the globe in four months if there was no land in the way, according to a calculation made by Canadian scientist David Welch.

The Snake River sockeye swam the same distance, in relation to its body size, in a mere two months. Harry was nearly 7 inches long when captured.

Welch and research scientist Marc Trudel in separate, though complementary, research projects chart the progress of young salmon that stream up the coast after leaving the Columbia River and other freshwater systems.

The sockeye was caught by Trudel's research team just south of southeast Alaska, about 1,100 kilometers (684 miles) north of the Columbia River on July 1, 2007. The fish was released from the Sawtooth Hatchery in central Idaho on May 8, 2007.

The travel speed was estimated with the assumption that it had swum in a straight line, 24 hours per day, in covering the distance from Idaho west to the Pacific Ocean (1,600 kilometers or 994 miles) and up the coast from the Columbia River plume.

It had to be swimming much faster at times, since it would have had to stall to search for food, Trudel said.

As surprising as the speed was the fact that the researchers even caught a Snake River sockeye. Only about 100,000 sockeye smolts were released in Idaho last year. That's a tiny fraction of the hundreds of millions of young fish that pour from the Columbia River and other U.S. and Canadian streams.

"To our knowledge, this is the first recovery of a juvenile Redfish Lake sockeye salmon at sea," according to the annual report to the Bonneville Power Administration for Trudel's "Canada-USA Salmon Shelf Survival Study published in 2007."

"It's like finding a needle in a haystack," Trudel said. Another two sockeye believed to be of Snake River origin were caught this year, one about halfway up the west coast of Vancouver Island and the other near the location of last year's catch. Both would also have had to maintain a four-body-lengths-per-second beeline to reach the locale where they were captured.

"This is quite impressive and unheard of, as far as I can tell, for juvenile sockeye salmon to migrate that fast," Trudel said. "All in all, it looks like these fish are darting north very quickly once they enter the ocean and don't linger for too long in the Columbia River plume."



“The working hypothesis of this research is that fast growth enhances the marine survival of salmon, either because fast growing fish quickly reach a size that is sufficient to successfully avoid predators, or because they accumulate enough energy reserves to better survive their first winter at sea, a period generally considered critical in the life cycle of salmon,” according to the 2007 annual report.

Knowing where the fish go and the quality of food there potentially can help estimate future years’ adult returns to rivers.

“Our research shows that different populations of Columbia River salmon move to different locations along the coastal zone where they establish their ocean feeding grounds and overwinter,” the report says. “We further show that ocean conditions experienced by juvenile Columbia River salmon vary among regions of the coast, with higher plankton productivity and temperatures off the west coast of Vancouver Island than in Southeast Alaska.”

“Taken together, our analyses indicate that the relative survival of different stocks of salmon in the ocean will depend on where they migrate in the ocean, and that changes at the base of the food chain must be taken into consideration to understand the effects of ocean conditions on salmon growth, and hence, on salmon survival.”

“Basically we now have 10 years of data on various measurements of ocean conditions,” Trudel said. A short-term goal is to use the information in modeling intended to forecast adult returns 1-2 years ahead of time.

Endangered Snake River sockeye is the most imperiled of the Columbia basin’s 13 listed salmon and steelhead species, kept alive only through a captive broodstock rearing program. This year, however, the largest return by far in the history of the program arrived at the hatchery and at Redfish Lake Creek.

“At this point I don’t see anything that stands out in 2006,” Trudel said of the year most of this year’s return would have gone to sea.

High Speed Harry was named in honor of Lonesome Larry, the only Snake River sockeye to return to Idaho in 1998.

Columbia Basin Bulletin, 9/26/2008

Northwest is Saudi Arabia of hydrogen energy

The Pacific Northwest is the Saudi Arabia of hydrogen energy. A new technological breakthrough called “hydrogen hubs” can safely capture this energy, cut power bills, clean our air and strengthen the power grid. Oregon is leading this effort.

State Rep. Vic Gilliam of Silverton recently led a bipartisan group of more than 30 of our legislators in signing a letter to Gov. Ted Kulongoski urging Oregon to become a world leader in developing a new hydrogen economy.

Why is the Northwest the Saudi Arabia of hydrogen energy?

In a single second, the spring flow of the Columbia River can produce 250,000 cubic feet of water. The hydrogen locked in each cubic foot of water equals 3.64 gallons of gasoline.

Saudi Arabia’s entire remaining oil reserves equal about 260 billion barrels — 5.2 trillion gallons of gasoline. The Columbia produces hydrogen equal to the 5.2 trillion gallons of gasoline, all of Saudi Arabia’s remaining reserves, in 67 days. It does this year in and year out for the rest of time.

Statesman Journal, 9/23/2008



NOAA fisheries releases disaster aid to west coast salmon industry

NOAA's Fisheries Service announced this week that it is making \$100 million of disaster-relief aid available to West Coast salmon fishermen.

"The salmon fishery has been a mainstay of the West Coast's ocean fishing revenues for many years," said U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez. "This year's closure left thousands of fishermen and dependent businesses struggling to make ends meet. This disaster aid package of \$100 million will help them get back on their feet."

The agency will provide the money in the form of a grant to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The commission will distribute the money, based on the agreements reached with the states, to fishermen and related businesses affected by this year's closure of the ocean salmon fishing season off California, Oregon, and Washington.

The unprecedented collapse of Sacramento River fall chinook, combined with the exceptionally poor status of coho salmon from Oregon and Washington, led officials to close all commercial and sport chinook ocean fishing off California and most of Oregon this year. Only a small hatchery-origin recreational coho fishery off central and southern

Oregon remained open, which also affected Washington fishermen. The governors of all three West Coast states requested a federal disaster declaration as a result of the closures. The declaration, issued last May, paved the way for Congress to appropriate a \$170 million disaster-relief package in July.

Federal officials say the remaining \$70 million of congressionally appropriated disaster-relief money is expected to become available later in the year as the \$100 million is spent.

The grant developed by the Pacific States Marine Fishery Commission, in consultation with representatives of the West Coast governors, provides relief to affected commercial fishermen, wholesalers, processors, charter boat owners and recreational guides and businesses dependent on fishing.

Officials plan to mail application forms this week to commercial fishermen with permits. Businesses affected by the salmon closure can download application forms from the commission's Web site at <http://www.psmfc.org>.

Applicants must be licensed state permit holders or have purchased a state business license or permit in 2007. For more information, go to <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Salmon-Harvest-Hatcheries/Salmon-Fishery-Management/Salmon-Fishery-08.cfm>

Columbia Basin Bulletin, 9/19/2008

NYC tap water bottled, sold in stores for \$1.50

A company is bottling New York City tap water and selling it in stores for \$1.50. Tap'd NY founder Craig Zucker says when he first came to the city in 2003 from Ohio he could tell right away that the tap water was better.

Last year, he founded his bottled water company, which promotes itself as having a "local twist." The company draws its product from the city's public water system and purifies it using reverse osmosis.

Zucker says his company is a for-profit business with a message that water should be "kept honest and local." He says shipping water into New York from places like Fiji and France is an insult to the city. Zucker pays only his city water bill for his company's product. Twenty-ounce bottles of Tap'd NY are available at stores in Manhattan.

U.S. Water News Online, September 2008



FERC approves natural gas terminal-pipeline in Columbia estuary

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Thursday approved a controversial proposal to build and operate a liquefied natural gas import terminal and related pipeline near the mouth of the Columbia.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski later in the day announced the state will request a rehearing. "Today's decision by the federal government lacks accountability to the environment and the people of Oregon," Kulongoski said.

"Federal law requires a supplemental environmental impact statement be issued and open for public comment when a project changes substantially. But the Commission has decided to ignore the law and instead, approve a project with incomplete mitigation plans and without regard to Oregon's important concerns.

"Oregon deserves a rehearing on this project. Moving forward with this project—which is incomplete—disregards states' rights in this process. If legal action is necessary to compel FERC to do this right, I am prepared to exercise that option," the governor said. Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire called the decision "premature and troubling."

This project will result in a 17 mile underground natural gas pipeline that will run from near the mouth of Mill Creek on the Columbia River to north of Kelso in Cowlitz County in Southwest Washington," Gregoire said. "I share the concerns of those living in the area, and believe FERC's inadequate review fails to address legitimate environmental and public safety concerns raised by state and local leaders, and members of the community.

FERC's conditional approval of the Bradford Landing project acknowledges concerns expressed by state and local government agencies, public officials, non-governmental organizations and members of the public about whether the region needs such a gas supply and about its potential environmental consequences. But it says those concerns were addressed in FERC staff environmental impact statement completed in June.

"After careful review of the information and analysis contained in the EIS we affirm the conclusion reached in the EIS that construction and operation of the Bradwood Project, with the adoption of the proposed mitigation measures, would result in only limited adverse environmental impact," the FERC decision document says. "We also conclude that the project is needed to meet the projected energy needs of the Pacific Northwest."

The decision was made on a 4-1 vote with Commissioner Jon Wellinghoff dissenting.

Columbia Basin Bulletin, 9/19/2008

Fresno considers lawn buybacks to save water

The city of Fresno is considering lawn buybacks as it studies ways to conserve water with the growing population.

The city council's Urban Water Management Plan, which outlines water-saving goals and ways to reach them, includes a proposal to pay homeowners to remove lawns and ban water-consuming landscaping in new construction.

Fresno, with a population approaching 450,000, charges residents a flat rate for water no matter how much they use, a practice that will end by 2013. Fresno residents use an average of 60 gallons of water a day more than their neighbors in Clovis, where homes are metered.

Fresno officials say residents use 75 million gallons a day in the winter and more than 250 million in the summer, much of it to water lawns.

U.S. Water News Online, October 2008



BPA to increase fish and wildlife spending by 55%

The Bonneville Power Administration expects to increase its “integrated” Columbia River basin fish and wildlife program spending by 55 percent during the fiscal years 2009-2011 period, agency officials told the Northwest Power and Conservation Council Wednesday.

Fish and wildlife expenses will rise from the \$143 million level experienced over the past three years to \$200 million in 2009, a decision finalized in July by the agency. The increase is driven by project funding needs arising from a new NOAA Fisheries Service biological opinion for the Federal Columbia River Power System and from new “salmon accords” signed with basin states and tribes.

Both new and ongoing projects called for in the 2008 BiOp and/or in the accords represent 10-year BPA funding agreements. The accords and BiOp were finalized in May.

BPA expects integrated program costs to jump to \$230 million in 2010 and to \$235 million in 2011. Those decisions will be finalized later this month.

The “start-of-year” planning budget for 2009 is estimated at \$213 million, a figure that takes into account the fact that BPA normally ends up spending 7 percent less than budgeted because of delayed project implementation and other factors.

About \$46 million in spending in the program’s 2009 budget are projects without a commitment beyond that year, though BPA notes some of the work is certain to draw funding to maintain past investments. The budget calculations include annual 2.5 percent cost of inflation increases beginning in 2010.

The budget analysis, produced at the NPCC’s request, is “intended to stimulate conversation about a longer funding commitment” across the board, said Greg Delwiche, BPA vice president for Environment, Fish and Wildlife.

Washington Council member Tom Karier agreed on the need to gain more long-term certainty for fish and wildlife restoration efforts and for ratepayers. BPA covers its fish and wildlife costs through revenues from wholesale power customers. The federal agency markets electricity generated in the federal Columbia/Snake river hydro system.

“The region needs to work on a comprehensive, long-term budget agreement with Bonneville,” Karier said. “Things don’t end at the end of 2011.”

The integrated program manages projects intended to meet BPA’s mitigation obligations under the Northwest Power Act, consistent with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council fish and wildlife program goals and strategies, as well as BPA’s Endangered Species Act off-site fish and wildlife requirements under biological opinions from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA.

The NPA, passed by Congress in 1980, required the creation of the NPCC, which has two members each representing the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. The law directed the NPCC to create a fish and wildlife strategy to protect and enhance fish and wildlife affected by the construction and operation of the hydro system. It directed BPA to fund the Council program.

The power act also bid the Council to amend its “program” at least every five years. That process is now in progress with draft amendments out for public review. The draft incorporates the provisions of the ESA BiOp and the accords.

The Bonneville analysis estimates that \$46 million to \$50 million will be spent annually in 2009-2011 on ongoing non-BiOp/non-accord projects.



Delwiche said the funding increases were needed to achieve a key goal of implementing both the new FCRPS BiOp and the Columbia Basin Fish Accords without reducing funding for the other non-BiOp and/or non-accord elements of the program.

“While the magnitude of these funding increases is unprecedented in nature, BPA believes these increases are critical for successful implementation of an all-H (hydro, habitat, hatchery and harvest) set of strategies for ESA compliance and recovering ESA-listed salmon and steelhead,” according to BPA’s analysis.

“The 55 percent increase is the largest in the history of the program but we feel it is necessary to meet our commitments,” Delwiche said.

A breakdown of the 2009 start-of-year budget shows 64 percent is for continuation of existing projects — 22 percent or \$46 million for non-BiOp/non-accord work; 28 percent or \$61 million for BiOp-only projects; 10 percent or \$21 million for projects that meet both BiOp and accord needs and \$9 million or 4 percent for accord-only projects.

The 2009 budget earmarks \$22 million or 10 percent of the total budget for new accord-only projects, \$31 million or 15 percent for new BiOp-only projects and \$23 million or 11 percent for new projects required by both the accords and the BiOp. To say a project is BiOp-only does not necessarily mean it will provide benefits only for listed fish.

“These projects serve a dual purpose” in many cases, said Bill Maslen, BPA’s fish and wildlife director. A tributary riparian restoration project, as an example, can provide biological benefits for both listed and non-listed species that reside there.

The existing projects have for the most part been processed through the Council’s selection process with their technical merit assessed by the Independent Scientific Review Panel.

“It is important that the Council continue to play an important role in recommending funding of mitigation actions that are scientifically sound and are the most cost-effective means to meet Program objectives, including new BiOp actions outside those in the Accords,” according to Bonneville.

Some of the BiOp projects may require an expedited selection and science review process so they can be implemented in 2009. Such intricacies will be worked out in the coming months.

“...there are many new budget management complexities as well as policies that will need to be developed, and important unanswered questions that still need to be addressed given the new Biological Opinion and Fish Accords and the related significant Program increase in FY 2009,” BPA concludes.

“During autumn 2008, BPA will develop an overall Fish and Wildlife Program budget management plan in coordination with the region, with opportunity for input and comment, to address these questions, issues and policies.”

The projected budget includes an increase in funding for research, monitoring and evaluation from about \$50 million this year to \$90 million in 2009. Those costs, over time, need to be reined in to some degree, Delwiche said. Much of the increase stems from the BiOp. He said paring RM&E would allow more money to be spent on on-the-ground projects that directly benefit fish and wildlife.

“BPA also anticipates that the Council will continue playing a lead role in reforming the region’s RM&E framework,” according to the BPA budget analysis. “In ‘09, BPA’s analysis indicates that about \$56M in RM&E, data management and coordination is expected to be funded in the mainstem/systemwide category, and an additional \$33M in anticipated RM&E/data/coordination spending in the provinces.”

Columbia Basin Bulletin, 9/19/2008



Polar Bears are not threatened But jobs, economy, and energy development are

Representing an alliance of ranchers, landowners, employers and consumers, PLF (Pacific Legal Foundation) Recently filed a lawsuit challenging the federal government's listing of the polar bear under the Endangered Species Act.

Why have we taken this action?

Because of the good news that the polar bear isn't endangered.

And the bad news that jobs and the economy are endangered—by the polar bear listing!

We repeat: The polar bear is NOT endangered. The alarming claims about possible extinction that have gotten so much press attention do not square with the most credible studies. In fact, the government's own best scientific model says the opposite: polar bear populations are alive and well, and will continue that way!

The State of Alaska, led by Gov. (Sarah) Palin, has launched its own legal challenge to the polar bear listing. PLF's entry into the legal battle ensures that the court hears our unique legal expertise.

Also, we're making sure that the perspective of businesses, landowners and consumers—the people who, like you, will be the real victims if the polar bear listing cripples the economy—is front and center.

Good news: Polar bears numbers are up sharply.

Polar bear numbers have been rising dramatically over the decades. And the government's own best studies say polar bear populations will continue to be plentiful and robust into the future.

Even under the government's lowest population estimates, there will be at least 20,000 polar bears in the Arctic over the next four to five decades. In contrast, there were only 8,000 polar bears 50 years ago.

So under the lowest projections offered by the government's scientific model, there will be more than double the number of polar bears half a century from now compared to half a century ago.

As always with excessive and unnecessary environmental regulation, the real threat from the polar bear listing is to people—all of us whose livelihoods, families and future depend on a healthy productive economy.

Because the polar bear listing is based on speculative projections about climate change, it promises to spark a tsunami of environmentalist lawsuits designed to shut down business and industrial activity that emits carbon dioxide.

Pacific Legal Foundation, 10/8/2008

Read coverage of these and many other stories online at: www.oregonwatercoalition.org