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From: Jenkins, Kris
Sent: Friday, October 24, 2003 9:11 AM
To: Phillips, Kendra
Subject: FW: Comment on APRE report document 2003-17

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From: NORMAN NELSON [mailto:echofilm@mindspring.com]
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2003 11:45 AM
To: comments@nwcouncil.org
Subject: Comment on APRE report document 2003-17

Comments on APRE report from Norman W Nelson, Echo Film Production, Boise, Idaho

The goals are clear and I will try to limit my comments to them
1. It must produce a healthy and viable hatchery population.

The hatchery programs have sustained healthy but not viable populations. Species like Sockeye and Coho are not viable yet. It is interesting that Steelhead over Bonneville this Oct 2003 are about 143000 and that this is perceived has a huge return. In reality it's not as numbers in these species should be equated with their true potential and historic production. Each female can lay up 3500 eggs so you are really only talking about the 100% arrival of the off spring on only 40 fish. Sustainable numbers have not been reached for our Salmon or Steelhead. Before the dams and the arrival of Lewis & Clark the Columbia produced some 17 million anadromous fish, we dont expect anything like that but we certainly are well below a sustainable population. Obviously the wild fish continue to demand considerably more effort in order to maintain the small existing gene pool. Much of this gene pool is highly specialized like the up river Snake River species. They require an unusual emphasis because without the gene pool intact you wont have fish that can swim over a 1000 miles.

2. It must make a sustainable contribution of adult returns to conservation and/or harvest.

We should be focusing on sustainability not harvest as the numbers of fish appear large but in reality and relative to the existing quality habitat, still remain in low numbers. Harvest is sending a mixed signal in upstream Idaho. Here a short season produces a huge turn out and economic benefit to Idaho yet the media presents the endangered species issue to the resource so everyone is harvesting an endangered species that supposedly needs more study

and understanding. The program of anglers releasing wild fish, I believe has worked, and fishermen do seem to respect the requirement. Without hatcheries we would have no harvestable return. Again wild fish and gene pool preservation needs more effort from the standpoint of protecting wild fish, wild habitat, improving even more habitat, and at some point solving the dam issue. These populations declined in line with the addition of the dams in direct relationship and the documentation is published extensively. No other significant action happened in the environment to reduce the wild cycle at the time frame the dams were installed...so the facts speak for themselves.

3. Its potential effects on wild and native populations and the environment must be understood. Fisheries biologists are extremely sensitive to the issue of over producing hatchery fish that compete for habitat and resources with wild fish. One reason for the fishing season in Idaho is to reduce competition. The issue that is not considered is the existing habitat that could be productive yet has no fish return, either wild or hatchery raised. The NWPPC's own program that successfully rehabilitated Bear Valley Creek in Central Idaho was a tremendous success and a co effort with the Shoshone Bannock Tribe. I have filmed the results for BPA. Here you have a pristine environment, rearing pools, a free flowing stream to the Salmon river yet the fish return is minimal relative to what could be produced. Same goes for the upper reaches of the S Fork of the Clearwater where the stream was completely landscaped, if you will, for salmon production. I would hope that these areas could receive more "eggs" of a wider variety of the gene pool to evaluate the success through future returns and a more "wild" form of hatchery reintroduction. More experimentation with techniques that are closer to the know wild cycle could be highly successful. In this case the fish should be considered wild and not handled and de finned like hatchery fish.

4. It must collect, record, evaluate, and disseminate information pertaining to the first three conditions so that decision-makers may be informed about the benefits and risks of the program relative to other means of achieving similar conservation and harvest goals.

The life cycle of the Salmon/Steelhead has been so over studied, over publized and under accepted that it remains a continuous drain on NWPPC and BPA funds. The effort to understand these fish should be changed to understand how to sustain them through the present unnatural obstacles of their lifecycle, dams, pollution, predators, and habitat. More experimentation with reintroduction techniques that mimick the natural cycle are needed. Obviously the ocean condition and pasture there have a huge impact on fish returns to the Columbia system. These are known, the ocean cycle can be evaluated, so the work needs to focus on the river system. Unfortunately the river system of the Columbia River has 114 dams on it. It was definitely overbuild by 4 dams on the Lower Snake that produce less

than 2 per cent of Northwest power needs. The income from the angling sport from healthy returns of Salmon would overwhelm the relative economic benefit of these dams. Hatcheries are a part of the solution and we can thank the many successes of hatchery production for what few fish we have today. The NWPPC should be the leader in the effort to save these fish. I believe in the biologists and the people who have been contracted and given grants to work on this issue by the NWPPC. They are far more effective and credible in their success than the Federal National Marine Fisheries studies and re studies. If you look at the Umatilla Indian reservations effort to bring Salmon back to the Umatilla river and you see what was once a dry river bed now has over 2500 chinook returning to spawn with ever increasing numbers it becomes obviously that the foresight of these people and the confidence given them by NWPPC proved worthwhile, and a short time and without wasting funds. If we have spent 3 billion on this effort already and we are still trying to figure it out then the leadership has been poor. I say give it to the NWPPC and lets get it done. Thanks for every hatchery we have and for the experimentation in the wild cycle that they can now bring to the table.

Norman Nelson

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