

**Cowlitz Fisheries Informational Meeting Questions & Answers**  
**March 26, 2015**

1. **Q.** Stray rate is low, but in tonight's electronic polling results, 58% of attendees said it was significant in terms of limiting recycling and you said that was the right answer. What does that mean?

*A. Stray rates tell us how many hatchery steelhead return to natural spawning areas and may interact with natural origin steelhead. If a high proportion of hatchery steelhead interacts with the natural population, this may cause the offspring to be less able to survive in the wild. National Marine Fisheries Service guidelines for stray rates and the Proportion of Hatchery Origin Spawners (pHOS) are intended to keep this interaction level low enough to prevent population genetic problems.*

2. **Q.** When will Tacoma Power have enough data points to make a decision on stray rates?

*A. It is best to use averages when applying data to estimate what you expect to happen in the future. That way, normal variations can be accounted for. The FTC will make a decision on stray rates each year based on the best available information, and each year more information will be available to make that decision. Most of the management decisions are based on five-year averages when available and if appropriate.*

3. **Q.** How confident are we regarding the impact of stray rates on the In-Season Implementation Tool (ISIT) model?

*A. Sensitivity analysis on stray rates within the ISIT model has not been performed.*

4. **Q.** Summer steelhead is a large hatchery program, yet it isn't a mitigation program for the project in that there is no historically occurring steelhead program to mitigate for. So why is it receiving status of overriding consideration factor?

*A. Hatchery summer steelhead production is part of the agreement that was made through the Fisheries and Hatchery Management Plan to mitigate for dams on the Cowlitz River. Summer steelhead is a desirable sport fish and represents about 7% of the total numbers of anadromous fish released in the Cowlitz from the hatcheries.*

5. **Q.** What is meant by the Upper Cowlitz River?

*A. The Upper Cowlitz River usually means the area upstream (above) Mayfield Dam.*

6. **Q.** What about satellite rearing facilities?

*A. Tacoma Power and the Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee continue to evaluate the fish production program needs for satellite facilities in the Cowlitz River basin. To date, no need for satellite facility programs has been identified. There appears to be a high potential for utilizing raceways at the Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility for spring Chinook rearing ponds.*

7. **Q.** When will we have an opportunity to provide input on the new Fisheries and Hatchery Management Plan (FHMP)?
- A.** *The FHMP is scheduled to be updated in 2016. The public will have an opportunity to provide input on the draft plan this coming winter. Tacoma Power and the Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee will be developing a schedule for public meetings and comments.*
8. **Q.** Why not give some summer-run steelhead pounders to the springers? If native fish are important, then why not?
- A.** *There may be ways to increase spring Chinook production. The main question would be space at the hatcheries and maintaining the overall 650,000 lb. cap at the two hatcheries.*
9. **Q.** How does the Smolt-to-Adult Return (SAR) percentage for our fall Chinook compare to that of the Columbia River?
- A.** *Cowlitz fall Chinook SAR = 0.14%; Toutle = 0.10%; Fallert Creek = 0.28%; Kalama Falls = 0.29%; Washougal = 0.27%.*
10. **Q.** What measures might Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) consider to convert a higher number of returns to the creel? How can we improve summer-run steelhead harvest?
- A.** *WDFW has recently changed several regulations in the Cowlitz River that should help provide more harvest of summer-run steelhead, including: 1) Barbed hooks may be used from June 1- July 31, 2015, 2) The bag limit for steelhead has increased to three fish per day, and; 3) The two-pole endorsement area was expanded to include the entire river upstream of the Lexington bridge.*
11. **Q.** Would you use acclimation ponds to create a longer time for people to fish?
- A.** *Off-station rearing locations may be possible for some species, but there must be some consideration for potential increase in stray rates affecting natural origin populations.*
12. **Q.** Will you move the two-pole endorsement above the Toledo Bridge?
- A.** *See answer to question 10.*
13. **Q.** Are the Mayfield fall Chinook net pens still a go? How many are you rearing?
- A.** *WDFW is rearing about 2 million fall Chinook in the Mayfield net pens for release in June 2015.*
14. **Q.** When will a decision be made on the total number of summer steelhead recycled?
- A.** *A decision will be made prior to June 2015 when the recycling program would begin.*