

Project Name	2025 Annual Program Review – Hatchery Production
Date Proposal Submitted	4/1/2025
Date of Requested Decision	5/6/2024
Requested By	Eric Shoblom
Date of Decision¹	May 6, 2025

¹ Decision will become final if committee members who were not present at this meeting do not oppose this proposed decision within 7 days

FTC Decision and Justification

The FTC supports the following decision based on the 2025 APR process. Tacoma Power will produce the following programs in the Cowlitz Hatchery Complex for brood year 2025 of Coho, fall Chinook Salmon, Summer Steelhead and Cutthroat Trout. Winter steelhead and spring Chinook Salmon goals will take effect in the 2026 brood year as is typical of the 2020 Fisheries and Hatchery Management Update (FHMP) Annual Project Review (APR) process.

- Fall Chinook: 3,500,000
- Spring Chinook: 1,657,000
- Coho: 2,178,000
- Winter Steelhead: 644,500
- Summer Steelhead: 650,000
- Cutthroat Trout: 100,599

Members Present: FTC members present represented WDFW, Ecology, Trout Unlimited and Tacoma Power.

Proposed Decision or Consideration

The 2025 Cowlitz Complex hatchery programs are proposed below (Table 1). The programs are in alignment with FHMP transition plans that have been approved by the FTC (DD# 2022 02).

Program release numbers and sizes at release remain largely unchanged. However, there is one notable change. If successful, the Mayfield Coho net pen pilot project will transition to a full program in 2025. If not successful, the FTC shall decide whether to reduce the Coho program in favor of the new, larger sized spring Chinook program or to rebalance program goals to fit within the 650k lb cap. The project background is as follows:

In the 2023 APR meeting, the option to increase spring Chinook production within the Salmon Hatchery by shifting a portion of Coho production off site into Mayfield net pens was selected. This option increased the total poundage of the Cowlitz Complex beyond Tacoma's responsibilities (i.e. >650k lbs.). To ensure the success of this option, Tacoma conducted a pre-pilot program in 2024 where brood year 2023 Coho survival are currently

being tested in 4 net pens (about 100k). Success will be measured by comparing survival and fish health metrics between the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery and the Mayfield net pens. If successful, Tacoma will move into the full pilot study in 2025 where an entire Salmon Hatchery pond of Coho (about 250k) will be reared in the net pens as part of the 2024 APR. This, and a reduction of the overall spring Chinook program of 21k lbs, will allow for space for one additional pond of yearling spring Chinook at the hatchery. As stated in the 2024 APR, this full, pilot program will occur for one year only. As the current net pen pilot study has shown signs of success based on survival to date, this APR Decision Document is written to assume that funding (other than Tacoma mitigation funds) will be identified to continue the net pen program into 2026. This assumption secures gametes for the potential extension of this program. However, if other funding is not secured, programs will be rebalanced to ensure the 650k pound cap is maintained.

Table 1 represents the proposed program goals for the 2025 brood year of Coho, fall Chinook Salmon, Summer Steelhead, spring Chinook and Cutthroat Trout. Winter steelhead goals will take effect in the 2026 brood year as is typical of the APR process.

Table 1: APR Decision Years for Hatchery Production

Species	Before 2011 FHMP Update	2021 APR Goal	2022 APR Goal	2023 APR Goal	2024 APR Goal	2025 APR Goal
Fall Chinook	4,800,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000
Spring Chinook	959,800	1,738,529	1,738,529	1,678,000	1,678,000	1,657,000
Coho	2,835,000	2,178,000	2,178,000	2,178,000	2,178,000	2,178,000
Winter Steelhead	690,000	647,000	647,000	644,500	644,500	644,500
Summer Steelhead	550,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000
Cutthroat	160,000	100,599	100,599	100,599	100,599	100,599

Table 2 depicts a detailed breakdown of the proposed programs and their poundage.

Table 2: 2025 APR
Details

Location	Species	Seg/Int	Program	Total	FPP	Pounds
Trout Hatchery	Summer Run Steelhead	SEG	625,000	650,000	5.5	113,636
	Summer Run Steelhead (FOC)*	SEG	25,000		5.5	4,545
	Cutthroat Trout (FOC)*	SEG	10,599	100,599	4	2,650
	Cutthroat Trout	SEG	90,000		4	22,500
	Lower Winter Steelhead	SEG	308,500	644,500	7	44,071
	Tilton Winter Steelhead	INT	100,00		7	14,286
	Upper Cow Winter Steelhead	INT	236,000		7	33,714
Salmon Hatchery	Spring Chinook	SEG	700,000	1,657,000	5	140,000
	Spring Chinook	SEG	420,000		8	52,500
	Spring Chinook	SEG	537,000		12	44,750
	Fall Chinook	INT	3,500,000	3,500,000	80	43,750
	Coho	INT	1,928,000	2,178,000	15	128,533
	Coho Net Pens*	INT	250,000		35	7,143
Total						652,079

*Program size subject to reduction. Maximum size is listed.

Background

The characteristics (number, size, integration rate, release date, etc.) of the Cowlitz Hatchery Complex program is determined through the APR process, as described in the FHMP.

The 2025 APR was based on data inputs from the FTC and public feedback as required in the FHMP. All FTC meetings are open to the public. Public involvement included:

- March 4th FTC meeting (public in attendance), APR goals presented.
- April 1st FTC meeting (public in attendance), APR Draft Decision Document introduced.
- April 16th APR meeting (public in attendance), feedback requested and discussed
- May 6th FTC meeting (public in attendance), APR Proposed Final Decision Document presented and discussed for approval

This document represents the results of the FTC discussion and final decision at the May 6th FTC meeting (public in attendance).

Coordination Need

Tacoma, WDFW, and the FTC will coordinate around any changing program needs and limitations due to actual adult returns and other factors. Shortfalls or over production of juvenile hatchery salmonids will be reported to the FTC, as well as the anticipated impacts for adult returns in subsequent years.

The performance of the pre-pilot net pen program will be evaluated by both Tacoma, and WDFW hatchery and pathology staff. This will entail a comparison of Coho survival and fish health metrics between the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery and the Mayfield Net Pens program. The pens were released on 4/28/2025. Depending on the outcome of the evaluation, the FTC will approve/disapprove of the Phase 2 pilot project in DD 2024-04 at the 6/3/2025 meeting.

Friends of the Cowlitz (FOC) may potentially receive up to 25k Summer Run Steelhead at 10fpp and 10k Cutthroat Trout at 5.5fpp from the programs listed in this document. They will be scheduled for final rearing and release at 5.5 (steelhead) and 4 fpp (cutthroat) from the Toledo Net Pens in May.

Public Feedback log:

April 1st FTC Meeting

Jack T: What about reducing the coho program by 150k in favor of increasing spring Chinook production?

- Response: A reduction of 150k would not be enough to increase spring Chinook or raise the 12fpp group to a larger size. Hatchery space is already maxed-out.

Greg K: There are a lot of other anglers out there than just on the Cowlitz. I would like to see the programs stay the same.

April 16th APR Meeting

Two specific APR recommendations.

Jack T:

- 1) Coho: reduce production from 2.178 million to 2.0 million, shift poundage to spring chinook. [CCA?] Would give credit for coho net pens as one of the satellite rearing facilities.
- 2) Fall chinook: as per last year, reduce production to 1 million fish, use wild broodstock, apply poundage savings to spring chinook.

Responses:

WDFW (Bryce): Comments are the same as were provided last year in response to the same request. Answers are the same and will be discussed in more detail at FTC. In short:

- 1) Coho. The net pen pilot program is shifting to phase 2 now, and how it continues might allow for changes in Spring Chinook rearing and balancing numbers. Waiting for full pilot, but early information looks positive to entertain this type of program adjustment in the future.
- 2) Fall Chinook. Still working on understanding the survival differential at the Cowlitz and we can improve that for recovery and fisheries (inside and outside of Cowlitz basin), so this plays into a bigger discussion on fisheries performance. Will work through the 4-step process Jenise described to evaluate and have more discussion with FTC and others. Also, analysis for Spring Chinook pointed to portfolio approach being advantageous (survival at different sizes in different years) in addition to larger fish yielding higher survival. This portfolio approach is still being evaluated.

Tacoma (Matt): Thanks for pointed and direct recommendations.

Other public comments were heard during feedback sessions but no other direct request to modify the APR goals proposed in this document.

Summary of Potential Impacts
<p>The hatchery programs have remained static for the past several years, with very few changes to release numbers or size at release.</p> <p>The Mayfield net pen project may result in impacts yet unknown and will be monitored regularly, per the established protocols developed jointly by Tacoma and WDFW.</p> <p>If approved, the FOC net pens may result in impacts yet unknown and will be monitored regularly, per an agreement and established protocols developed with WDFW.</p>