

Fisheries

Tacoma Power is planning many new exciting fisheries programs and facilities for the North Fork Skokomish watershed as a part of the Cushman Project settlement agreement.

New Fisheries Programs

Tacoma Power has proposed to introduce sockeye and spring Chinook and enhance the existing winter steelhead and coho populations in the North Fork in cooperation with the Washington Dept of Fish & Wildlife and the Skokomish Tribe. In addition, Tacoma Power will annually release up to 100,000 rainbow trout for sport harvest.

Sockeye

Tacoma Power will introduce sockeye by:

- constructing a new sockeye hatchery at Saltwater Park
- incubating up to 2 million eggs and rearing the fry
- releasing fry into Lake Cushman
- collecting and releasing smolts into the lower North Fork Skokomish River

Spring Chinook, coho and winter steelhead

Tacoma Power will produce these fish at either a new hatchery at Lake Kokanee or an existing state hatchery in the Skokomish River watershed:

- up to 375,000 spring Chinook fingerlings and yearlings
- up to 35,000 coho smolts
- up to 15,000 steelhead smolts and 225 wild-spawning adult steelhead

To help these fish migrate safely around the dams, Tacoma Power will:

- build net pen facilities in Lake Kokanee at Dam No. 2 to rear and acclimate fish before they are released downstream
- capture returning adults at a new collection facility at the base of Cushman Dam No. 2
- release captured adults in Lake Cushman or retain them for broodstock to build the runs

Smolt collection

For a viable program, smolts must be collected and transported around the dams. To accomplish this, Tacoma Power will:

- build a new floating fish collection facility in Lake Cushman to collect smolts ready to migrate to the ocean
- release collected smolts in the North Fork at the base of No. 2 Dam to continue their migration

Resident trout

Tacoma Power's resident trout program will release rainbow trout at three fish per pound:

- up to 35,000 into Lake Kokanee
- up to 65,000 into lakes in Mason, Kitsap, Thurston, Pierce and Jefferson counties

Q & A

Will there be a sockeye fishery open to the public as a result of the new sockeye hatchery?

The Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Skokomish Tribe are the authorized fisheries co-managers for the sockeye run. They will annually monitor the size of the run and make harvest management decisions based on the health of the population.

Since there are no sockeye and spring Chinook in the North Fork, where will these fish come from?

Tacoma Power is working with WDFW and Skokomish Tribe to locate sources of donor stocks that can be used to begin these two programs.

Why are hatcheries needed to produce these fish? Can't wild fish be used to increase the size of the fish populations?

The North Fork Skokomish currently does not support sockeye and spring Chinook populations. Sockeye and spring Chinook eggs from other watersheds will be incubated in a hatchery in the Skokomish-Hood Canal watershed to help establish the runs.

The river supports a healthy coho population and a small wild Winter Steelhead population. The coho population thrived under the old flow regime. To supplement the population under the new flow regime, Tacoma Power will annually rear between 10,000 and 35,000 coho smolts from wild parents.

The wild winter steelhead program will be an expansion of an innovative steelhead supplementation program currently used by WDFW and National Marine Fisheries Service to increase wild steelhead populations in Hood Canal tributaries.

How will we know if these fisheries programs are working?

Tacoma Power has committed to an extensive monitoring program that will gather data on the results of these new fisheries programs. A committee made up of fisheries scientists from Tacoma Power, federal and state agencies and the Skokomish Tribe will review the data and make recommendations on the future of the programs.

Although Tacoma Power submitted the Cushman Settlement Agreement containing these license articles and proposals to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the actual requirements of the license may be amended by the Commission.

For more information, and to view the settlement agreement and other documents, please visit mytpu.org and enter 'Cushman Settlement Agreement' in the search bar.