

# The Dipnetter

News of the River from the  
Columbia River Inter-Tribal  
Fish Commission



March 2014

## CRITFC Executive Director's Message

### TRIBAL SUCCESS: SNAKE RIVER FALL CHINOOK

Last year, a record 56,000 Snake River fall chinook passed Lower Granite Dam. Making this even more impressive is that only 20 years ago, these fish were on the brink of extinction. This is one of the greatest achievements of Columbia River salmon restoration efforts to date, and the fact that it is the result of a massive tribal effort makes the accomplishment all the sweeter.

In the early 1900's, Snake River fall chinook were found from the mouth of the Snake River upstream to Shoshone Falls in southern Idaho more than 900 miles from the ocean. As late as the 1930's, annual fall chinook returns in the Snake River numbered a half million adults.

The construction of dams on the Snake River eliminated or severely degraded 530 miles (80%) of the historical habitat. The most productive of that habitat was upriver from Hells Canyon Dam—a dam with no fish passage. This resulted in a steep decline of Snake River fall chinook. Annual adult fall chinook returns were fewer than 1,000 adults at Lower Granite Dam from 1975 to 1995. In 1990, only 78 wild adults passed the dam.



The Nez Perce Tribe began implementing its recovery program in 1995 using existing hatcheries and facilities. This showed some signs of success, but they knew that what the program needed was a dedicated facility to raise

the wild salmon to outplant throughout their range. After a long and often frustrating 10-year process, the Nez Perce Tribe finally won approval to build a cutting-edge hatchery to supplement natural chinook populations with hatchery-reared fish of the same stock. The Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery was completed in 2005. (pictured above). This facility now produces about 450,000 yearling and 2.8 million sub-yearling fall chinook smolts that are released each year into the Clearwater and Snake rivers.

After twenty years of barely hanging on, the run began to increase once the Nez Perce recovery program started. The number of adult fall chinook returning above Lower Granite Dam has increased, but more importantly, the number of wild fish returning to the Snake River has increased, too. Most of the outplanted fish spawn naturally, producing wild offspring. An estimated 21,000 (38%) of last year's run were wild fish, setting a new record since the construction of Lower Granite Dam in 1975.

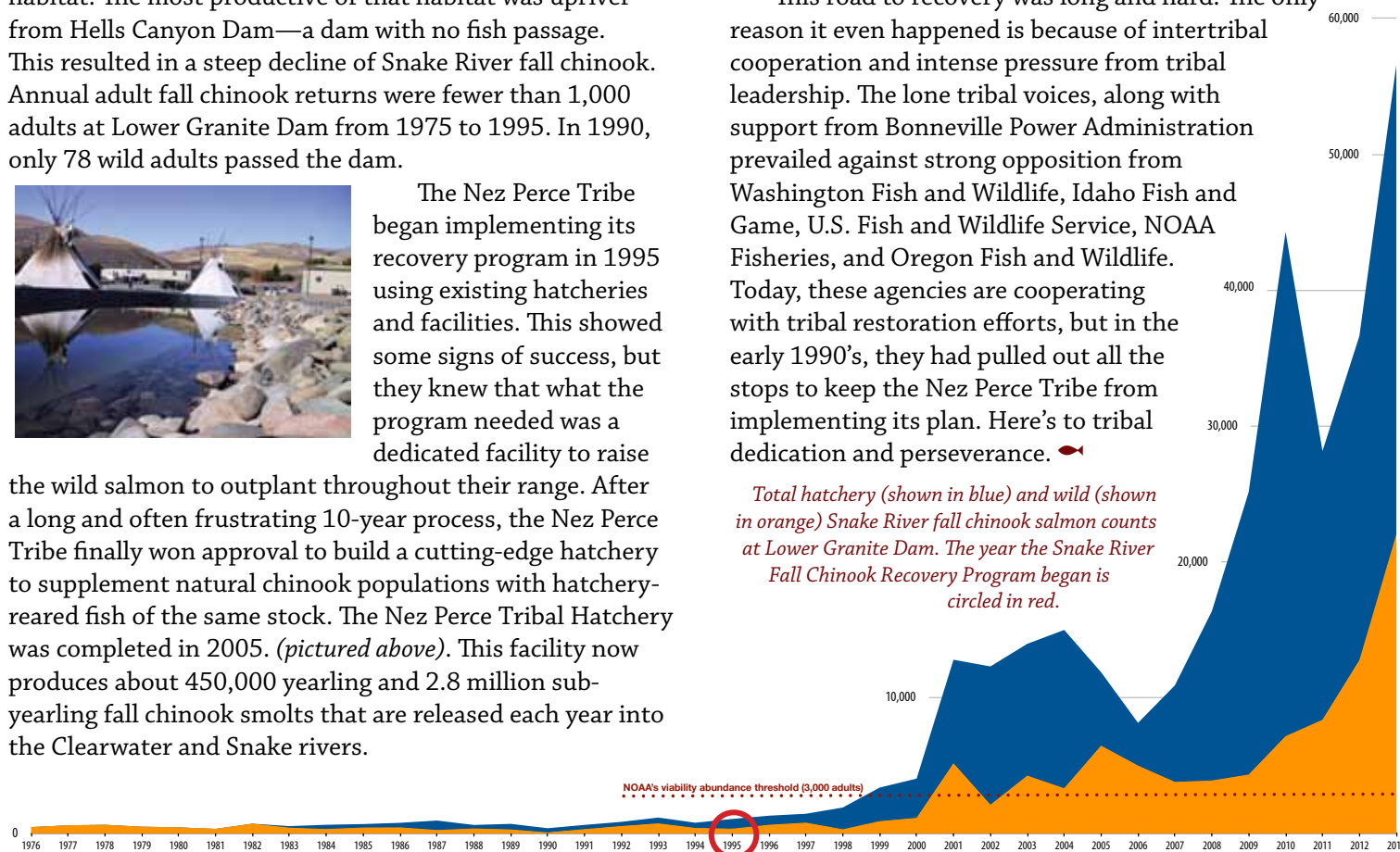


Paul Lumley  
YAKAMA

In 2009, the higher returns of Snake River fall chinook allowed co-managers to open the first fall chinook fishery in the Snake River in 35 years. This fishery has occurred each year since then.

This road to recovery was long and hard. The only reason it even happened is because of intertribal cooperation and intense pressure from tribal leadership. The lone tribal voices, along with support from Bonneville Power Administration prevailed against strong opposition from Washington Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, and Oregon Fish and Wildlife. Today, these agencies are cooperating with tribal restoration efforts, but in the early 1990's, they had pulled out all the stops to keep the Nez Perce Tribe from implementing its plan. Here's to tribal dedication and perseverance. 🐟

*Total hatchery (shown in blue) and wild (shown in orange) Snake River fall chinook salmon counts at Lower Granite Dam. The year the Snake River Fall Chinook Recovery Program began is circled in red.*



NOAA's viability abundance threshold (3,000 adults)

# SEA LION SEASON

DOUG HATCH, CRITFC SENIOR BIOLOGIST

The spring chinook will soon be returning to the Columbia River. Unfortunately this also means we can expect sea lions soon, too. Traps and hazing boats will be back on the river to deter them, however there is a strong likelihood that sea lions will still have an impact on returning adult salmon.

Last year, sea lions found their way above Bonneville Dam. Tribal fishers reported seeing sea lions prey on salmon throughout the Bonneville pool from Cascade Locks to The Dalles. Any information tribal fishers can provide tribal biologists on the sea lion presence in Zone 6 would be useful in the continuing effort to address this problem.

If you see a sea lion while out on the river in Zone 6, please:

- ❖ Record the date, time, location, and what the sea lion is doing.
- ❖ Note any distinguishing marks or brands, locations where they have hauled out (come out of the water to rest), and take photos if possible.

This information is important for managers and will be useful in the ongoing efforts to remove sea lions below Bonneville.

If sea lions are spotted around fishing gear or interfering with tribal fisheries, you may attempt to chase away the sea lion using slingshots, fireworks, other noisemakers, or rocks. However, federal law prohibits anyone, including tribal fishers, from injuring or killing a sea lion. Anyone caught injuring or killing a

sea lion can be charged with a felony and the penalties are quite substantial.

If you attempt to deter a nuisance sea lion, remember personal safety. Please be aware that it does involve risk to the person doing the deterring and anyone around them. Sea lions and seals are wild animals that may react unpredictably, resulting in personal injury or additional damage to property. Sea lions are large and powerful animals that can move as quickly as a person on land.

To report a sea lion above Bonneville Dam please contact CRITFC Enforcement: (800) 487-3474 or (541) 386-6363 or CRITFC's Doug Hatch: (503) 238-0667. 🐟



*The sea lion trap set up last year at The Dalles Marina.*

*photo by Bobby Begay*

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# FALL CHINOOK FORECASTS

STUART ELLIS, CRITFC HARVEST BIOLOGIST

The 2014 fall chinook forecasts were completed last month. The 2014 pre-season forecast for upriver fall chinook is for a record high run. The table below shows the 2013 forecasts, the 2013 actual returns, and the 2014 forecasts.

These forecasts are all based on the number of fish at the Columbia River mouth. There were good jack returns last year, but these high forecasts are really a result of the very high 3- and 4-year-old return last fall. We are expecting this run to be mostly older fish. It is too early to tell if there will really be a record run. Even if the run ends up being significantly under what is predicted, with a forecast this high, it should still be very large. It is

important to remember that both treaty and non-treaty mainstem fisheries are managed on the actual run, not just the pre-season forecast. There should be lots of good fall chinook fishing this year in any event.

Unfortunately things don't look as rosy for B steelhead and coho. The forecasts for these stocks are still being calculated, but preliminary findings suggest a pretty average coho run and a below average B steelhead run similar to the last couple years. While there is no hard limit on coho in tribal fisheries, a low B steelhead run will add a lot of complications to fall season fisheries, especially after mid-September. 🐟

**FALL CHINOOK RIVER MOUTH RUN SIZES**

	2013		2014 February Forecast
	February Forecast	Actual Return	
<b>Upriver Bright</b> <i>(all Bright stock fish from upstream of McNary plus the Deschutes)</i>	432,500	784,100	973,300
<b>Bonneville Pool Hatchery Spring Creek Hatchery tules</b>	38,000	86,600	115,100
<b>Bonneville Hatchery Upriver Bright</b>	35,200	35,600	49,500
<b>Pool Upriver Bright</b> <i>(Bright stock fish from Little White, Klickitat, and Umatilla Hatcheries)</i>	70,000	207,800	310,600
<b>Up-River Total</b>	<b>575,700</b>	<b>1,114,100</b>	<b>1,448,500</b>

# FUTURE OF OUR SALMON CONFERENCE

AJA DECOTEAU, CRITFC WATERSHED DEPARTMENT MANAGER

The goal of the Future of Our Salmon Conferences is to facilitate dialogue between fisheries co-managers and other interested parties in an quest for a unified vision of salmon restoration in the Columbia River Basin.

The next Future of Our Salmon conference is scheduled for April 23-24 at the Oregon Convention Center. A preliminary technical workshop will be on March 18-20 at Northern Quest Resort in Spokane. The 2014 conference theme is restoring fish passage to historical locations throughout the Columbia River Basin, particularly for salmon, lamprey, sturgeon, and bull trout. Out of this conference, we intend to develop a unified strategy to restore fish passage that allows Columbia River Basin fish to return to their entire historical range.

The conference is for tribal, First Nation, federal, state, provincial, and local government representatives; Indian, sport, and commercial fishers; environmental organizations; and anyone else interested in restoring healthy, sustainable populations of anadromous and resident fish throughout the Columbia River Basin.

Visit [www.critfc.org/future](http://www.critfc.org/future) for more information on the conference. 🐟







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Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission  
700 NE Multnomah St, Suite 1200  
Portland, OR 97232  
[www.critfc.org](http://www.critfc.org) · (503) 238-0667

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Yakama • Warm Springs  
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## IMPORTANT DIPNETTER SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE

This is the **final month** the Dipnetter will be sent out to the old mailing list.

Last month, a pre-stamped postcard was enclosed in the newsletter asking if you would like to continue receiving The Dipnetter and how you would like to receive it. Many subscribers have already responded. If you haven't, please fill it out and return it today.

**If you would like to continue receiving the Dipnetter in the mail, be sure to check the appropriate box. If you don't return this postcard, you will no longer receive a copy of The Dipnetter in the mail.**

If you misplaced your postcard from last month, you can contact CRITFC to let us know that you want to continue receiving the print version of The Dipnetter monthly.

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If you have story ideas or suggestions for information you would like to see in upcoming issues, please contact us at (503) 238-0667 or [croj@critfc.org](mailto:croj@critfc.org). 🐟