CRITFC Executive Director’s Message

Forecasting Salmon Runs
Paul Lumley, CRITFC Executive Director

One of the key pieces of information in fishery planning is the pre-season forecast—an estimate of how many salmon will be returning. This isn’t always a perfect science and it is based on past performance. In some years, the forecast is close to what we see, but just as often, the forecast can be way off.

Forecasts are based on the historical relationship between age classes. For example the number of jacks returning in one year is used to forecast the number of four-year-old fish in the next year. This assumes that the future will behave just as it has in the past. The forecast techniques are all based on the assumption that survival rate, particularly in the juvenile life stages, remains relatively constant over time. As with many other things in life, conditions vary over time, resulting in these assumptions to be not at all what occurs when the fish actually come in.

During the past few years, we have seen very high spring chinook jack returns—more than we have ever seen before. While we still saw large spring chinook adult returns, the proportion between adults and jacks did not match up with the proportions seen in the historical data.

Jack counts is one of the most important methods we use to predict the adult returns, and with their numbers abnormally high, our adult returns were sometimes “over projected.” We’re still studying why so many jacks returned last year. The connection between jack counts and future adult counts makes this year’s low jack return troubling, as it might indicate low adult chinook returns in the upcoming years.

Despite being imprecise, forecasts are a valuable tool for fishery planning. We know that the actual returns will vary from the forecasts; we just can’t tell by how much and in what direction until the fish start to show up. Each tribe sets its own fishing seasons, and to do this in a responsible and appropriate manner, they depend on accurate and up-to-date run size information and forecasts. CRITFC and tribal fishery staffs gathering this information and adjust or fine-tune the pre-season forecasts as the actual return progresses. We are constantly trying to make these forecasts more reliable, but with the major changes that are affecting the river, the salmon, and the climate, this is turning out to be harder than it was in the past.

Paul Lumley
Yakama

Spring and Summer Fishery Update and Forecast
by Stuart Ellis, harvest biologist, CRITFC fishery management

The spring season fisheries should continue through June 15. This year’s spring chinook run has turned out slightly better than forecast. At press time, a total spring run of 271,000 upriver fish is predicted at the river mouth (the original forecast was 232,500). Of these, approximately 250,000 should reach Bonneville Dam. The jack counts are fairly low; this could mean a smaller return next year.

The four tribes’ permit gillnet fisheries harvested over 8,000 fish. The Zone 6 platform fisheries have caught about 2,500 fish. Around 900 fish were caught below Bonneville Dam.

Close to 4,000 fish were caught in the first week of commercial gillnet fishing and over 3,000 were caught in the second and third weeks. About 3,600 are expected to be caught in the fourth week. So far, the number of fish sold commercially by the tribes is larger than the number of fish caught in the mainstem commercially by the non-Indian fishery. The non-Indian mainstem commercial fishery has caught less than 4,000 upriver fish. It also caught less than 1,000 lower river fish that would not have passed Bonneville. The catch balance limit under the U.S. v. Oregon Management Agreement, ensures that the total non-treaty fishery impacts on upriver spring chinook are not more than the allowed tribal catch.
Power Line Installation Across Columbia River Will Affect River Traffic Between Avery and Celilo

by Nathan Mullen, Big Eddy-Knight Transmission Line Project, Bonneville Power Administration

Since 2012, BPA has been constructing a new transmission line running 28 miles from the Celilo Substation in The Dalles to Knight Substation, a new facility about five miles northwest of Goldendale. The tribes have been monitoring and consulting on the project throughout this time. The Yakama Nation halted construction on one of the towers due to impacts to a cultural site. The tribe and BPA worked together to come up with a workable solution to relocate that particular tower.

During June and July, BPA will be installing 20 new transmission cables on the new towers where the new line crosses the Columbia River near Wishram, Washington. Because of the very long distance these cables must cross (about 4,700 feet), BPA and its contractors plan to use a small helicopter to fly high-strength nylon ropes across the Columbia River that will be used to pull the transmission lines across. This work, called “stringing,” requires great precision and control, and is sensitive to high winds. Under windy conditions, the helicopters cannot operate safely and the work would be suspended temporarily.

While some of the stringing operations are underway, it will be necessary to temporarily stop highway traffic along I-84 in Oregon, railway traffic on both sides of the river, and river traffic within 500 yards of the Celilo train bridge. The shutdowns during the day will be short, lasting from a few minutes up to one hour at a time. The shutdowns and delays will occur intermittently during the day approximately between 9am to 5pm. The best chance to avoid these delays would be before 9am or after 5pm.

The construction contractor will have a boat in the water during the stringing operations to help ensure safety on the river.

BPA will continue working closely with CRITFC’s Enforcement Team and our other tribal partners to share updates and new information with tribal fishers. Details and contact information will be posted at the Celilo and Avery access sites.

The operation should be fairly easy to spot when it is happening. Boats will be in the water to monitor the progress. The phone numbers of the boat operators will be posted at the access sites for fishers to contact to check on up-to-the-minute river traffic status.

Our goal is to cause the smallest possible disruption in river operations, while keeping everyone safe.


CRITFC Officers and Commissioners

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Big Eddy-Knight Structures

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Big Eddy-Knight Transmission Line
The Columbia River Indian Fishers Expo is hosted by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. This event provides Indian fishers with information, resources, and training that will help them improve river safety, fish quality, and equipment maintenance. The event and lunch are free for all Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce fishers. The Expo runs from 8:00 to 4:00 on Friday, July 24.

8:00   Trade show opens; coffee service  
8:30   Conference opening ceremony and welcoming  
8:45   Morning presentations and clinics  
         Food Handling Certification Class  
11:30  River rescue demonstration  
Noon   Lunch  
         Keynote address by new CRITFC chairman  
         CRITFC executive director’s update to fishers  
2:00   Afternoon presentations and clinics  
2:45   Tribal Fish & Wildlife Committee Q&A sessions  
4:00   Expo closes  

All items and schedule are tentative. The final schedule and presentation descriptions will appear in next month’s Dipnetter.

Best Western Hood River Inn, 1108 E Marina Way (next to the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge)

Presentations and Demonstrations

Tribal Q & A
Fish & Wildlife Committee Question & Answer Sessions
The Fish & Wildlife Committee members from the four tribes will each host their own question and answer session for fishers. The sessions are open to everyone.

Luncheon Presentations
Keynote presentation by CRITFC chairman and CRITFC Executive Director’s update to fishers.

Boat Repair
Boat Engine Maintenance
Ways to keep your boat engine running at peak condition. Also: common engine-killing mistakes and how to avoid them. (Workshop held outdoors.)

Fiberglass Repair
A hands-on overview of basic fiberglass repair. Fishers can bring their own boats to the workshop to address specific questions. (Workshop held outdoors.)

Quality Handling
Food Handling Certification Class
Conducted by the Warm Springs Tribe’s sanitarian, completing this class will give fishers Warm Springs Tribe-issued certification that is recognized by the State of Oregon for sales within the state. Oregon residency is not required, but fishers selling to non-Indian customers over the bank in Oregon are encouraged to attend. Nancy Collins, Warm Springs Tribe

Marketing
Selling at Farmers Markets
Farmers markets focus on local, sustainable products; this presents a great opportunity for Indian fishers. Learn how to participate in farmers markets.

Value-added Products
How to develop a product that meets food safety regulations. Discussions include proper smoking, canning, and packaging techniques.

Vendors and Displays
A-1 Scales
The Dalles Marine Supply
Daco Fisherman Supplies
Columbia Riverkeepers
CRITFC information and presentations
Bonneville Power Administration
US Army Corps of Engineers

The Fishers Expo is one day only.
Want to learn how to increase the value of your fish harvest and hear the latest 2015 fall fishery outlook?

Would you like to hear about fishing and treaty rights from tribal leadership and ask them questions?

Would you like to learn how to get your harvest into local farmers markets?

How about learn the latest value-added and food safety techniques?

You can do all of these and more at the 2015 Columbia River Fisher’s Expo—a conference and trade show designed with the specific needs of tribal fishers in mind. The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission is hosting the Expo for all Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce fishers on July 24 from 8:00am to 5:00pm at the Hood River Inn.

Visit www.critfc.org and click on Fisher Services for a complete list of classes and vendors and the latest information.