



New draft plan provides roadmap for sockeye recovery

Today, NOAA Fisheries, the Idaho Office of Species Conservation, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the Idaho members of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council are providing this notification of the release of the public review draft of the Recovery Plan for Snake River sockeye salmon.

The plan outlines strategies and actions to recover the endangered species best known for swimming some 900 miles up the Columbia, Snake and Salmon rivers to spawn in Redfish Lake in the mountains of central Idaho.

From 1985 to 1990 only 58 wild sockeye returned to Idaho. A safety net hatchery program operated by Idaho Fish and Game and funded largely by the Bonneville Power Administration preserved what was left of the species and began gradually rebuilding sockeye numbers. So far this year, more than 1,800 sockeye adults have passed Lower Granite Dam on their way to spawn. Only in recent years have the fish begun spawning in significant numbers in the wild again.

The recovery plan calls for continuing partnerships to further expand sockeye numbers, benefiting future generations and providing long-term economic opportunities. Scientists from NOAA Fisheries, Idaho Fish and Game, the Shoshone Bannock Tribe, the Sawtooth National Forest, and Bonneville Power Administration developed the proposed recovery plan.

“We share a common vision with our state and Tribal partners to establish healthy sockeye populations in the wild that are abundant, productive and diverse and that no longer need ESA protections,” said Will Stelle, regional administrator of NOAA Fisheries. “We know we have a long way to go, and this draft plan is an important road map to organize our collective efforts.”

Virgil Moore, Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game stated: “This plan builds on the successful Snake River Sockeye Captive Broodstock program that was created in 1991 to bring this fish back from the brink of extinction.”

Last year a new sockeye hatchery in Springfield, Idaho, came on line with the capacity to dramatically expand releases of juvenile sockeye, which is expected to further increase returns. The plan calls for eventual expansion of sockeye into at least 3 of the lakes in Idaho’s Stanley Basin.

The plan will be available on line at:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/recovery_planning_and_implementation/snake_river/current_snake_river_recovery_plan_documents.html

Comments will be accepted through September 19, 2014.

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