

CAPTURE AND TRANSPORT OF LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER FALL CHINOOK SALMON (*ONCORHYNCHUS TSHAWYTSCHA*) DURING THE YEAR OF CONDIT DAM REMOVAL.

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ABSTRACT: The breaching of Condit Dam on the White Salmon River and draining of Northwestern Reservoir temporarily eliminated spawning habitat of adult lower Columbia River (LCR) tule fall Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) in the lower White Salmon River by inundating the spawning area with reservoir sediments. Since 2006, the White Salmon Working Group (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Yakama Nation, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, NOAA-Fisheries, PacifiCorp, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Geological Survey-Biological Resources Division) has coordinated studies in preparation for Condit Dam removal. Some of these studies eventually lead to the decision to capture and transport adult LCR tule fall Chinook salmon upstream of Condit Dam during the year of dam removal in lieu of adult collection and subsequent hatchery propagation as originally planned in the 1999 Condit Dam Removal Settlement Agreement.

A total of 679 LCR tule fall Chinook salmon (552 natural origin and 127 hatchery origin) were captured and transported upstream of Condit Dam and allowed to spawn naturally from August 30th to October 5th, 2012. Adults were captured using a resistance board weir and historical collection ponds at river mile 1.1 combined with several days a week of active capture using seines in the lower White Salmon River. Captures of steelhead (*O. mykiss*), coho salmon (*O. kisutch*), spring Chinook salmon, upriver bright fall Chinook salmon and pink salmon (*O. gorbuscha*) also occurred over the study period. Our estimated capture efficiency was 23% of the 2011 LCR tule fall Chinook salmon population in the White Salmon River. An estimate of 180 LCR tule fall Chinook salmon redds were observed before the breach of Condit Dam on October 26, 2011 between river miles 5.1 and 7.7 upstream of Condit Dam. Approximately 35 of the observed redds have been removed by active river “down cutting” near the upstream tip of what was Northwestern Reservoir by March 2012. Overall, this joint conservation action by the White Salmon Working Group was a success and similar actions could be considered for future dam removal efforts, where applicable.