

Title:

Yakima River Kelt Re-conditioning Project
Radio Tracking

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Radio telemetry is used to evaluate the success of the reconditioning project. The Kelts were tracked using a variety of methods including mobile tracking, fixed sites and aerial surveys. The fixed sites were located at Prosser Dam (RM 47.1), Sunnyside Dam (RM103.8), Roza Dam (RM 127.9), and the Naches River (Cowiche Dam RM 3.6). There were a total of 7 flights done from February through May. These flights proved to be essential in locating fish and investigating the disappearance of Kelts. Flights were done in all the basins and prioritized by fish movement. Mobile tracking was done by road and by raft. Mobile tracking allowed for actual pinpoint location and the eventual observation of Kelts building redds and spawning

During the 2004-2005 seasons, a total of 253, Kelts survived long term reconditioning to be released. A total of 41 radio tags were inserted into adult reconditioned steelhead. Each tag was inserted using the gastric insert technique. All fish were released the first part of December 2004, at Mabton (RM 59.8).

Of the 41 radio tagged Kelts, 6 kelts (15%) were detected in the Naches River including 3 that swam to nearly the furthest river mile of the Little Naches River. An additional 10 radio tags were detected past RM 70 (mouth of Satus Creek) but never detected again. The tags in these fish probably died and the fish distributed into select tributaries. Satus Creek had the 2nd highest count of Kelts, 4 (10%), followed by the Toppenish Creek, 1 (.02%) and Sulfur Drain with 2 fish detected at the mouth. The Kelt tracked the furthest, was located at RM 12 near the confluence of the North Fork and Middle Fork of the Little Naches River, a tributary of the Naches River. In addition to this male, two other females at river mile 7.6 and 4.5 respectively were both detected in the Little Naches River. There was also a male kelt observed on a redd, caught and eaten by a Bald Eagle as YN Fisheries Technicians watched. This happened on Dry Creek a tributary of the Satus system.