

Cle Elum Fish Passage Update: Reintroduction Moving Forward

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In 2008 the Yakama Nation (YN) participated in the completion of feasibility study of fish passage at Cle Elum and Bumping Lake dams. YN worked with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in developing the Master Plan for reintroduction of anadromous fish above the reservoirs. The effort is part of a Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) led cooperative investigation with the YN, state, other federal agencies that studied the feasibility of providing fish passage at Cle Elum Lake dam, one of the five large storage dams of the Yakima Project. The dams: Bumping, Kachess, Keechelus, Cle Elum, and Tieton, were never equipped with fish passage facilities. Four of the five reservoirs were originally natural lakes and historically supported Native American fisheries for sockeye salmon and other anadromous and resident fish. Of these Cle Elum has the best habitat above the reservoir for this fish passage project. The EIS process that has been launched is part of the agreed-upon planning process for Cle Elum Dam. An EIS for Bumping Lake fish passage will be prepared separately at a future time. The BOR estimated that approximately 263,000 to 1.2 million smolts will be needed to fully seed the Cle Elum River basin above Cle Elum Dam (USBOR 2007a and 2007b). This data was used to establish a near-term (2009-2017) project goal of collecting 500 pairs of adult sockeye salmon from Priest Rapids Dam depending on availability after escapement goals have been reached and the broodstock needs of the Skaha Lake project have been met (Wright and Smith 2004). Wright and Smith (2004) estimated a minimum escapement of between 10,000-40,000 fish above Wells Dam to meet the Skaha project needs of 250-1000 pairs of adults, before surplus brood can be obtained in late June/early July 2009. Successful implementation of fish passage at Cle Elum and Bumping dams could eventually lead to future detailed study of fish passage at the other three dams. The 2008 activities included 250,000 fry (April) and 250,000 summer/parr plants (June) above the lake, and 12,000 pit tagged coho released directly into the Cle Elum Lake. The interim passage protocols use Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags implanted in the test fish to monitor their movement through the system. PIT tag detectors located at Cle Elum, Roza, Prosser, McNary, and Bonneville dams will record the passage of these juveniles as they migrate downstream, and when they return as adults. The 2008 activities are a continuation of the work done in the previous four fiscal years.