



**Northwest Sportfishing
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Testimony of
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
Proposed Spill Study - Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Fish and Wildlife Program
May 28, 2014

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

NSIA is a trade organization with membership from around the US, with businesses primarily based in Oregon and Washington. Dependent on access to healthy fishery resources, we are dedicated to working toward what is best for abundant fish returns.

Growing sportfishing grows jobs, protects our heritage, and connects families and friends to the natural environment. Northwest sportfishing creates almost \$4 billion a year in economic impact and 35,000 jobs while serving 2 million customers. In Oregon, 11,000 jobs are sustained by 638,000 adult anglers. We rank 7th in the US for fishing visitor days and Columbia River fisheries are the lifeblood of this sportfishing/tourism economy.

The Columbia River spring Chinook fishery is vital to the industry because it tees up our entire year. After a long winter, anglers are anxious to get fishing. These chinook are the first to return, laden with fat and destined to fulfill our winter dreams, fuel a regional industry, sell tens of thousands of annual licenses, endorsement tags and hatchery harvest tags, while providing an unparalleled food source for families.

In just weeks, the springer fishery below Bonneville averages over 135,000 angler trips per year. We are crazed about these spring salmon! On average, it takes eight plus days of fishing to take home one spring Chinook. A 2009 study of the fishery found the daily expenditures at \$115, making a sport caught springer worth roughly a thousand bucks. This figure excludes boats, motors, trailers, electronics, rods, reels etc. Recovery would double these numbers! Worth their weight in gold, springers distribute economic benefits throughout rural communities from Astoria to Riggins, Idaho.

Anglers were quick to note the benefits of high spill conditions that brought back historic runs of spring Chinook in 2001 and 2002. Another example is the record run of fall Chinook returning this August. Ironically, when the 2014 adults migrated to the ocean as babies, there was so much over-generation that spill was often at levels exceeding what scientists would suggest in a spill experiment. Many days the nitrogen levels were at, or above, 130%.

However, with the present hydrosystem operations, the smolt to adult returns for wild spring Chinook have not been achieving replacement more than 80% of the time since 1998.

Oregon, the Nez Perce Tribe, the PFMC, NSIA and many others have recommended that regional scientists design a study of expanded spill in the

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spring. A properly designed spill test will use adaptive management principles to make well informed public policies.

Smolts that migrate through spillways have higher adult returns than those that pass through turbines or other pathways, and adult returns are the result we should be focused on. The Northwest Power Act compels BPA to work towards recovery, which will not occur without accounting for the effects of the hydrosystem on the full life cycle of the salmon and using adult returns as the metric for success.

Suggesting that BPA need only account for reach and dam passage for smolts is a lot like a GM plant suggesting that they are only responsible for assembling a car, but not responsible if the car operates. Especially when the years these performance standards are touted are years of high spill.

Another ‘red herring’ is the climate effects enhanced spill might have due to the potential use of fossil fuels for replacement energy. I say, “might have” because without a study design, a real examination of the benefits and potential policy tradeoffs cannot be analyzed.

There are a few things to keep in mind about climate and costs: 1) Snow melt and rainfall create a situation where the Columbia frequently has over generation from the 200 plus dams, greatly reducing power prices. 2) We are on track to meet the regional goals for energy conservation and renewables from the 6th power plan, and the northwest has even more opportunities available than the plan calls for. 3) Also promising are the energy reliability and financial benefits the west coast will derive from the growth of solar capacity in California.

NSIA shares the concerns about climate change because it is one of the major threats to salmon. That is why it’s exciting to explore a means to recover them in a climate friendly manner. But, these positive policy options are getting ahead of ourselves. Without a study design, we are all speculating.

BPA has hypothesized a worst case “cost to the public” for the spill test. While we believe a study design will tell a different “story”, even at worst case, we are talking about \$1.40 per month, or a cup of coffee at McDonalds. For customers of PGE and Pacific Corp., there would be no cost.

The data on adult returns is accumulating in a way that is impossible to ignore what appears to be a promising path to recovery, while protecting the dams. Without the option to test the benefits of spill, wild salmon will remain below replacement and we will be forced to look at more drastic and costly measures. Dam removal could be our only other option.

As decision makers, you know that science, along with other important considerations, inform policy. Designing the study will give the information needed to have a knowledgeable, not speculative, discussion on the policy implications. We believe it is inappropriate to inject politics into the design of a scientific study and thus is harmful to regional goals and our laws.

In all the years I have worked with scientists, managers, politicians, tribes, advocates and lawyers, I’ve never seen an action that provides such immediate and measurable benefits for the fish and our industry. This proposal has been reviewed by the Independent Science Advisory Board (ISAB) and they concur that a spring spill test has merit and the next step should be to develop a detailed design of the scientific study.

The prospects of testing our ability to double the spring Chinook runs back to Idaho, while leaving the dams in place and protecting farmer’s water, should have us all lined up and eager to see what the study design says. I’m certain that once you have a chance to review all the information you will be as excited as we are at NSIA.



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Fishing Related Economic Impact for Oregon

Retail Sales	\$680,636,132
Economic Output	\$1,172,481,577
Labor Income	\$382,802,979
State & Local Taxes	\$72,381,359
Federal Taxes	\$91,781,493
Jobs	11,043



Oregon is 7th in the Nation for Sportfishing Tourism

Rank	State	Number of Non-Resident Anglers	Total Non-Resident Expenditures
1.	Florida	1,197,279	\$898,283,876
2.	Michigan	347,029	\$326,337,857
3.	Wisconsin	336,753	\$445,006,874
4.	North Carolina	328,810	\$260,296,738
5.	Alaska	327,418	\$361,768,322
6.	New York	297,070	\$282,573,249
7.	Oregon	264,424	\$241,771,577
8.	Minnesota	259,324	\$364,108,877
9.	New Jersey	256,950	\$106,323,764
10.	Missouri	244,290	\$205,686,074



Spring Chinook Angler Trips

Below Bonneville Dam

on average **135,151** angler trips per year

÷ 16,136 spring Chinook kept each year

8.37 days to catch one spring Chinook

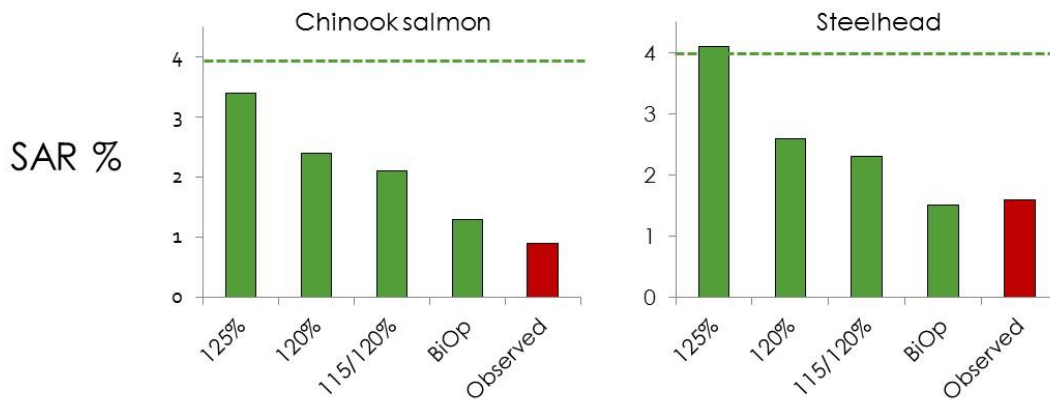
× \$115 average dollars spent per trip*

each salmon generates **\$962** in daily expenditures

*according to a 2009 study done by Southwick Associates

Likelihood of Recovery

(2-4% smolt to adult returns)





These Fish Matter

If the salmon and steelhead are running, then as far as I am concerned, God knows that all is well with the world... the health of the environment is good if the salmon and steelhead are around. It is simple.

- Governor Tom McCall

Every profession bears the responsibility to understand the circumstances that enable its existence.

- Robert Gutman