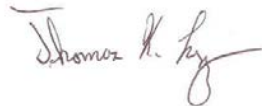


State, Federal and Tribal Fishery Agencies Joint Technical Staff Memo


*Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Colville Tribe
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

TO: Derek Fryer, COE

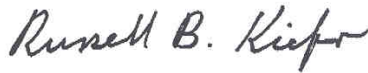
FROM:



Tom Lorz, CRITFC



Charles Morrill, WDFW



Russell Kiefer, IDFW



Dave Wills, USDFW



Sherri Sears, Colville Tribe



Erick Van Dyke, ODFW

SUBJECT: Comments on draft report “BiOp Performance Testing: Passage and Survival of Subyearling Chinook Salmon at Little Goose and Lower Monumental Dams, 2013”

DATE: January 21, 2014

The purpose of this memorandum is to request additional information to be included in the final version of “BiOp Performance Testing: Passage and Survival of Subyearling Chinook Salmon at Little Goose and Lower Monumental Dams, 2013.” We request the following information be added to the final report:

- **A discussion of the impacts to the applicability of the results due to the high tagging rejection rate**

Testing in 2013 had the highest rejection rate of any performance testing to date, at 18% of smolts sampled. The majority of these rejections were due to size (13%) and a smaller number for physical condition (5%). In 2010, testing at The Dalles Dam had a

rejection rate of 12.6%, which was concerning enough to SRWG members that rejection criteria were revised for future studies. In 2011 and 2012 rejection rates for subyearling Chinook were 3.2% and 6.3%.

More detail is required about the 2013 rejection rate, in particular regarding the distribution of rejection rates due to size across the season. Nearly one-fifth of the run at large was rejected for survival evaluation, and if this rejection rate differed widely between early and late parts of the study further evaluation will be required. Having an understanding of the proportion of smaller fish not tagged in the spring and summer time periods is important.

- **Route-specific passage and survival estimates for both projects**

Survival estimates in 2013 were approximately 5% lower than in 2012. The draft of this report implies that this additional mortality is due to higher tailrace egress in 2013 than 2012. However, route-specific survivals were not presented in this report. Route-specific survival information would enable managers to better understand differences in tailrace egress conditions across the spring-summer study periods and use this information effectively, to make better informed decisions regarding operations that could benefit survival of subyearling Chinook.

- **Dam and route-specific survival estimates for the spring (prior to June 21) and summer (after June 20) operations at Lower Monumental Dam during the test.**

In 2011 and 2012, changes in river conditions and operations generated early and late season estimates, as well as an overall season-wide estimate. However, in 2013 only the season-wide estimates were provided. The subyearling migration spans spring and summer spill operations at Lower Monumental, gas cap and 17 Kcfs respectively, in part because of hatchery releases that occur before the transition to summer spill. Consequently, the provision of survival estimates specific to spring and summer operations would provide managers with more data to evaluate the 2013 results and provide insight for potential future operations.

In conclusion, it is our opinion that more information about high rejection rates, survival estimates for spring and summer spill operations at Lower Monumental Dam, and route-specific survival estimates at Lower Monumental and Little Goose Dams are essential for a more thorough assessment of performance testing at during 2013. The inclusion of these data in the final report will provide managers with the information necessary to evaluate the current test results and better shape the discussion for potential remedies and future operations.