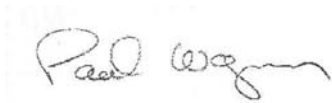


State, Federal and Tribal Fishery Agencies Joint Technical Staff Memo

TO: Stephen Pastor, PIT-Tag Steering Committee Chair
Mr. Derek Fryer, USACE



FROM: Paul Wagner (FPAC Co-Chair) on behalf of FPAC

SUBJECT: Salmon Managers' concerns over 2010 Sockeye transportation study and late entry of Sort-By-Code request

DATE: March 16, 2011

It has recently been brought to our attention that a Sort-by-Code request for the COE funded 2010 Sockeye transportation study that was approved by FPAC on May 7, 2010 was not processed by PTAGIS staff until June 5, 2010. It is our understanding that this request was not processed into the PTAGIS system because of a lack of communication from the COE biologist for this project.

According to the original request, the study was to run from May 1 to approximately July 1, in which case 70% of the tagged population of sockeye smolts (~62,000 total tags) were randomly assigned to be barged (when detected at LGR, LGS, or LMN), while 30% were randomly assigned to be in-river. The list of tags that were randomly pre-assigned to be barged was turned into PTAGIS by Biomark on April 29, 2010. This list consisted of approximately 44,700 tags that were to be coded for transport, if detected at a collector project during the period of transportation in 2010. Based on subsequent analyses of the detection data, of the nearly 44,700 Sockeye PIT-tags coded for transport in 2010, about 2,053 were detected at LGR, LGS, or LMN. However, only about 41 made it onto a barge, which equates to less than 2%.

Migration year 2010 was the second year of this COE funded project, which was intended to inform the salmon managers of impacts of the transportation program on sockeye smolts and, thus, adult returns. Because of the miscommunication between PTAGIS staff and the COE biologist, salmon managers will not be able to estimate route-specific SARs from the 2010 PIT-tags and, therefore, an evaluation of transportation on sockeye smolts will not be possible for migration year 2010.

Furthermore, in the spring of 2010, NOAA proposed that the FCRPS be operated in a manner to maximize transportation of salmonid smolts by not providing spill during the

month of May. This proposal was primarily due to a forecast of low spring flows for the Snake River and benefits of transportation for steelhead. This proposal was put forward to the Independent Science Advisory Board (ISAB) for review. Prior to the ISAB review, many of the above listed salmon managers argued that it was important to provide spill in May, especially in a low flow year. One of the primary concerns voiced by the salmon managers to provide spill in May of 2010 was the uncertainty over how sockeye juveniles are affected by transportation. The sockeye transportation study was intended to collect data that would provide insight as to how transportation affects sockeye smolts and their subsequent return as adults. Migration year 2010 also provided a unique opportunity to collect information on the provision of spill in a low flow year, which has only occurred one other time, in 2007.

In their review, the ISAB agreed with the salmon managers that, despite the predicted low flows, spill should be provided in May 2010. One of their primary arguments that the ISAB used to justify this recommendation was the impacts that a max-transport operation would have on the sockeye transportation study.

The FPAC finds it extremely concerning that an oversight of this magnitude could happen, particularly with such an important study. We request that the PTSC review the current policy regarding the implementation of approved Sort-by-Code requests, and work with PTAGIS staff to identify a procedure to eliminate these kinds of errors.

CC: David Marvin (PSMFC, PTAGIS)