

SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #2004-12

The following State, Federal, and Tribal Salmon Managers have participated in the preparation and support this SOR: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and the Columbia River Inter Tribal Fish Commission.

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FROM: David A. Wills, Chairperson, Salmon Managers

DATE: May 25, 2004

SUBJECT: Priest Rapids Flows

SPECIFICATIONS:

- Maintain flows at Priest Rapids to a week average of 125 Kcfs beginning June 1, 2004, continue until further notice.

JUSTIFICATION:

Several forecasts have been provided by the Action Agencies concerning Columbia River flows at Priest Rapids Dam through June 2004. Projected flows range between 130 Kcfs through all of June to an average flow in June of between 100 and 110 Kcfs. This request for initial June flows of 125 Kcfs is based upon both forecasts, while conservatively considering potential errors in each. Subsequent forecasts of flow will provide the basis for additional requests for modification of flow if necessary to avoid a severe decrease in flows for the last part of June.

The purpose of this request is to provide migration flow protection for steelhead presently migrating through the Mid and the Lower Columbia River, while managing flows to avoid a severe low flow period at the end of June when historic data shows significant passage of fall chinook juveniles at McNary Dam.

At the current time, steelhead continue to pass Rock Island Dam (Figure 1) and McNary Dam (Figure 2). Steelhead passage at Rock Island Dam was highest in Mid-May and has declined since then. Steelhead passage at McNary Dam is comprised primarily of steelhead from the Mid-Columbia River. The Biological Opinion calls for maximization of transportation of smolts at Snake River projects, when flows are projected to be below the 85 kcfs objective. This results in few steelhead arriving in-river at McNary Dam. McNary daily steelhead passage indices have been declining since May 15. The McNary historic cumulative average passage timing (Figure 3) shows that significant passage of sub-yearling fall chinook of Mid-Columbia River origin pass the project in the latter half of June. On average 45% of historic subyearling passage occurs prior to June 30 at McNary, with 95% confidence interval bounds of 29% and 60%. Given higher temperatures in 2004 this passage timing may be earlier than average, with a greater portion of Hanford Reach fish likely to pass during June.

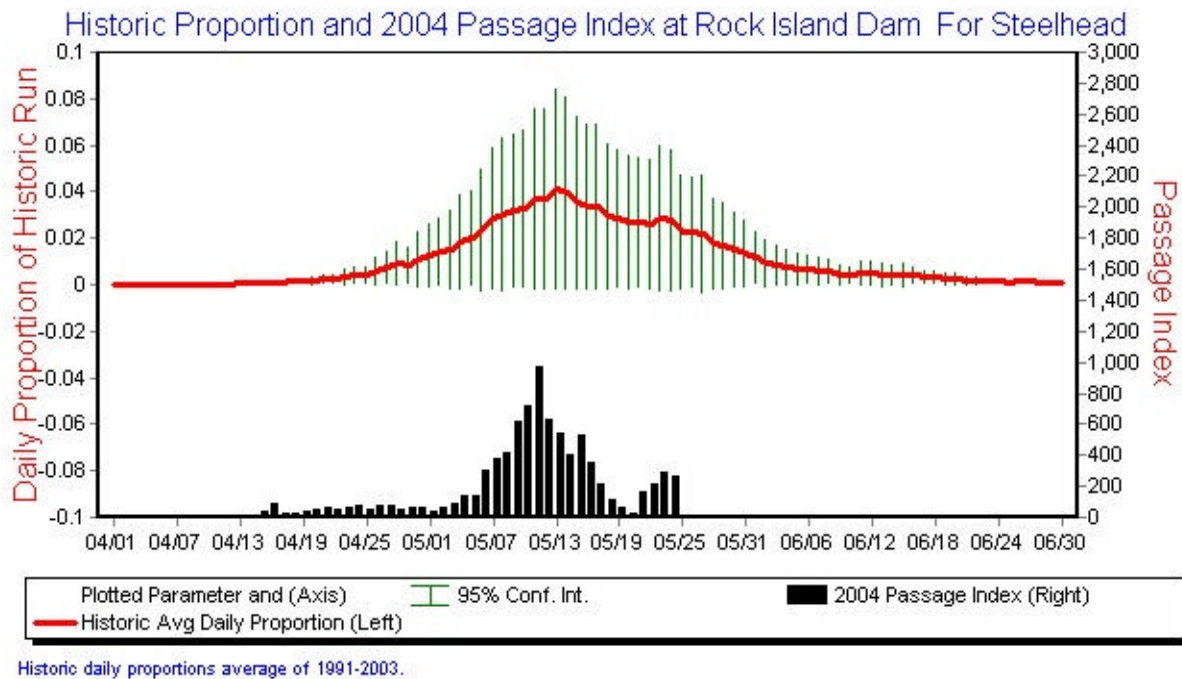


Figure 1.

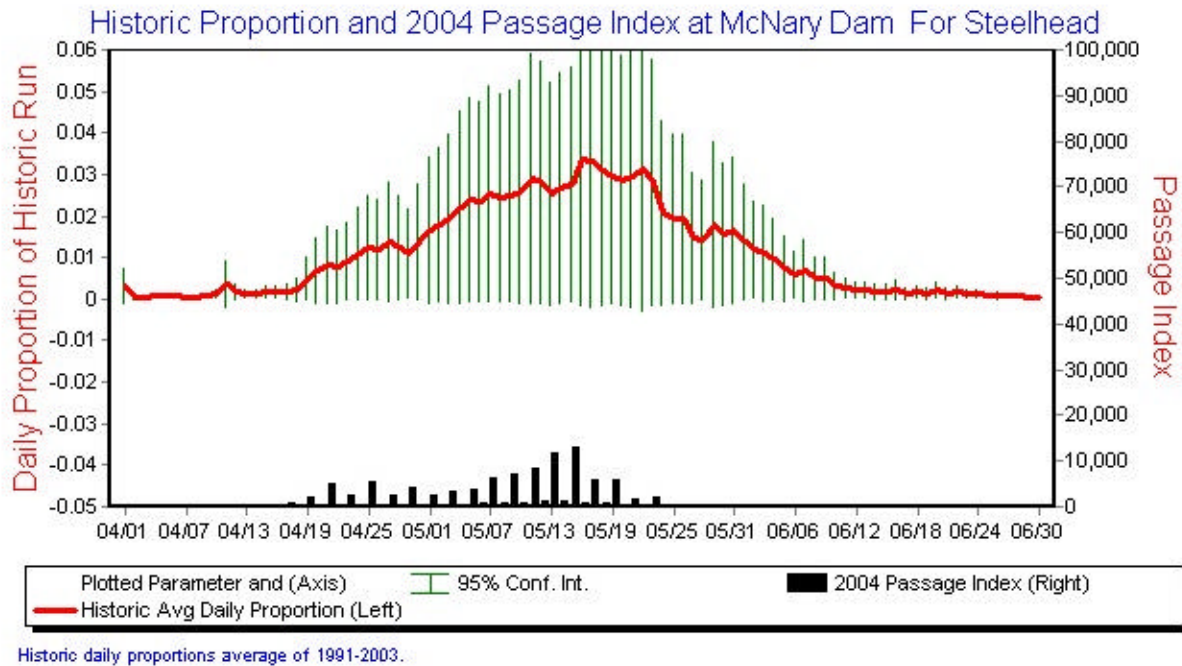


Figure 2.

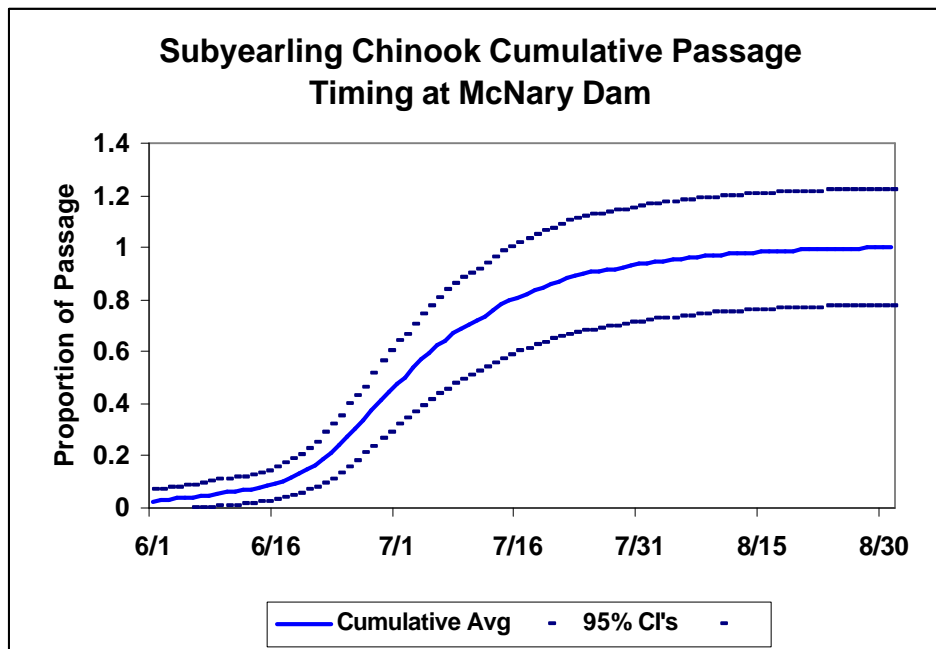


Figure 3.