

## **Update on USFWS 2005 Mass Marking Initiative**

### **Background**

Under Section 138 of FY 2003 Omnibus Appropriations Act (PL 108-7), Congress directed that “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall, in carrying out its responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species of salmon, implement a system of mass marking of salmonid stocks, intended for harvest, that are released from Federally operated or Federally financed hatcheries including but not limited to fish releases of coho, Chinook, and steelhead species.” Similar language appears in Section 129 of FY 2004 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation Act (PL 108-108) and in Section 126 of the FY 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Conference Report. Fish that are produced for conservation purposes are not required to be mass marked. The mandate for mass marking hatchery fish applies to all federal hatcheries, as well as state and other hatcheries that receive federal funding, therefore, much of the new mass marking program will be conducted at the state level, including the federally funded “Mitchell Act” hatcheries on the Columbia River, operated by the States of Washington and Oregon.

The purpose of the Congressional mass marking directive is twofold. First, a visual mark on hatchery fish will improve fish managers’ ability to determine the status of the natural origin component of populations by distinguishing hatchery fish from natural origin fish in mixed stock fishing situations and mixed spawning populations, thereby conferring a conservation and recovery planning benefit. Secondly, mass marking hatchery fish offers fishery managers a tool for providing mark selective fishing opportunities on abundant hatchery fish while providing appropriate protection to commingled natural origin fish or unmarked hatchery fish that are produced for conservation purposes.

To begin implementing the new hatchery fish mass marking directive, Congress provided \$1.6M in FY 2004 funding and \$2.1M in FY 2005 funding as specific earmarks in the USFWS budget to allow the purchase of automated marking equipment, to complete the purchase and installation of other infrastructure equipment needs, and to initiate the actual operational marking program. Three new automated marking trailers were contracted for purchase in 2004 and delivered to the USFWS early in 2005. Funding for one of these new trailers was received from the State of Washington with Congressional funding provided to Washington through its Inter-agency Commission (IAC) for Outdoor Recreation program. All of the FY 2004 funding was spent towards the procurement of the new automated marking trailers while the majority of the FY 2005 funding is targeted for the operational marking program and related expenses. A portion of the FY 2005 funding was required to complete the marking trailer contracts.

## **2005 Operational Marking Plans**

### **Columbia River Basin<sup>1</sup>**

Spring Creek NFH	Fall Chinook	14,200,000 450,000	AD-Clip DIT (Double Index Tag)
Little White Salmon NFH	Fall Chinook	1,600,000 200,000	AD-Clip DIT (Double Index Tag)

### **North Coast and Puget Sound<sup>2</sup>**

Makah NFH	Fall Chinook	2,040,000	AD-Clip
	W. Steelhead	200,000	AD-Clip
Quilcene NFH	Coho	110,000	AD-Clip
Quinault NFH	Fall Chinook	500,000	AD-Clip
	W. Steelhead	170,000	AD-Clip

<sup>1</sup> Does not include approximately 15,290,000 other hatchery fish already being tagged and/or marked at these and other Columbia River Basin hatcheries by the USFWS for hatchery evaluation, fishery management, brood stock management, and selective fishery opportunity purposes under alternate funding sources.

<sup>2</sup> Does not include approximately 790,000 other hatchery fish already being tagged and/or marked at these hatcheries by the USFWS for hatchery evaluation, fishery management, brood stock management, and selective fishery opportunity purposes under alternate funding sources.

## **2006 Operational Marking Plans**

### **Columbia River Basin<sup>1</sup>**

Spring Creek NFH	Fall Chinook	14,200,000 450,000	AD-Clip DIT (Double Index Tag)
Little White Salmon NFH	Fall Chinook	1,600,000 200,000	AD-Clip DIT (Double Index Tag)

Priest Rapids SH <sup>2</sup>	Fall Chinook	1,700,000	AD-Clip
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### **North Coast and Puget Sound<sup>3</sup>**

Makah NFH	Fall Chinook	2,040,000	AD-Clip
	W. Steelhead	200,000	AD-Clip
Quilcene NFH	Coho	110,000	AD-Clip
Quinault NFH	Fall Chinook	400,000	AD-Clip
	W. Steelhead	170,000	AD-Clip

<sup>1</sup> Does not include approximately 15,290,000 other hatchery fish already being tagged and/or marked at these and other Columbia River Basin hatcheries by the USFWS for hatchery evaluation, fishery management, brood stock management, and selective fishery opportunity purposes under alternate funding sources.

<sup>2</sup> This represents the federally funded John Day Dam mitigation production at Priest Rapids SH.

<sup>3</sup> Does not include approximately 790,000 other hatchery fish already being tagged and/or marked at these hatcheries by the USFWS for hatchery evaluation, fishery management, brood stock management, and selective fishery opportunity purposes under alternate funding sources.

## **Summary**

Consistent with the recent Congressional directive to mass mark hatchery fish that are intended for harvest, the USFWS has initiated a plan to mark approximately 19.5M new hatchery fish in 2005 and 21.1M new hatchery fish in 2006 under the new mass marking mandate. This new mass marking initiative is in addition to our current ongoing tagging/marking program in the Pacific Northwest of approximately 16.1M hatchery fish for hatchery evaluation, fishery management, brood stock management, and selective fishery opportunity purposes that is conducted under alternate funding sources. This new mass marking initiative represents more than a doubling of our current marking program. The Spring Creek NFH production program presents the greatest challenge with a total production release of 15.1M tule fall Chinook that need to be marked. The marking program at Spring Creek NFH represents the largest marking operation ever undertaken at a single facility. For 2005, approximately, one-half of Spring Creek NFH's production (7.6M) was successfully mass marked between mid-January and late February in preparation for release in early March. Mass marking continues on the remaining production which is scheduled for approximate equal releases of 3.75M fish in mid-April and mid-May, respectively.

Consistent with the Congressional language that exempts hatchery fish produced for conservation purposes from mass marking, the USFWS has made the decision to not mass mark approximately 5.0M hatchery fish that are produced for conservation purposes and which are released primarily under supplementation type programs. All past, current, and future mass marking proposals have been and will continue to be reported to the Pacific Salmon Commission's Selective Fishery Evaluation Committee using the established template for reporting adipose fin marking proposals, consistent with Pacific Salmon Commission guidance.

USFWS  
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