

SALMON TECHNICAL TEAM REPORT ON
KLAMATH DAM REMOVAL UPDATE

The Salmon Technical Team (STT) attended a virtual presentation on Klamath dam removal given by Jim Simondet of NOAA Fisheries, West Coast Region. The presentation was a very complete summary of the geography of the Klamath Basin, dam removal timeline, impacts and benefits of dam removal to Klamath salmon, and future planning.

Dam removal will potentially affect several aspects of assessment and management of the Klamath River fall Chinook (KRFC) salmon stock. The current stock assessment includes cohort reconstructions, abundance forecasting, and use of the Klamath Ocean Harvest Model (KOHM) to aid in fishery planning. Core data needed for the stock assessment include coded-wire tag recoveries (from ocean fisheries, freshwater fisheries, and escapement) and age-structured escapement and river harvest estimates from scale age data.

Iron Gate Hatchery on the Klamath River is slated to close in 2023, and Fall Creek Hatchery will open in 2024. Fall Creek Hatchery will have lower smolt and yearling production goals post dam removal relative to the current hatchery production, with plans to produce 55 percent of the current Iron Gate Hatchery production goal. However, the marking and tagging objective for Fall Creek Hatchery will be 50 percent of production while the current marking and tagging objective for Iron Gate Hatchery is 25 percent. Given the production goals and tagging objectives outlined in the presentation, transition from Iron Gate to Fall Creek could result in a small increase in marked and tagged KRFC. This is important for the stock assessment as tag recoveries in ocean fisheries are frequently be lower than recommended levels in California¹. However, the long-term operation of Fall Creek hatchery is not ensured (PacifiCorp is scheduled to run the hatchery for eight years post dam removal), which could lead to elimination of key data currently used for the KRFC assessment.

With regard to age-specific escapement estimates, the presentation did not directly address changes in escapement sampling and scale collection, though it did provide links to planning documents. The STT supports continued and expanded monitoring of escapement and scale collection to all areas in the Klamath Basin where KRFC return.

PFMC
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¹ <https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2015/11/agenda-item-d-2-attachment-4-2.pdf/>