

Rural Report

ODFW Chinook Harvest Ban due to low population numbers

Story by Scooter Brown

Roseburg OR – State fish and wildlife officials said that harvesting adult and jack wild spring Chinook salmon on the North and the mainstem Umpqua rivers will be prohibited starting in February 2024.

Citing historically low population numbers in 2023 for adult wild spring Chinook on the South Umpqua and numbers reportedly well below average in the North Umpqua River, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said low forecasts expected for 2024 have triggered the harvest prohibition on wild Chinook salmon.

“The best way to address these issues and reverse the fortunes of salmon and steelhead in the Umpqua is through targeted habitat and flow restoration to cool our rivers,” said Greg Huchko, District Fish Biologist.

Factors contributing to the low numbers include access to habitat, degraded habitat,

and predation from such non-native species as smallmouth bass, state fish and wildlife officials said. Multiple agencies are partnering with ODFW to address the fish passage issue for spring Chinook in the upper South Umpqua River, ODFW officials said.

State officials have said that the restrictions, which will go into effect starting on February 1, 2024, and continue through June 30, 2024, follow the conservation sliding scale in ODFW’s Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan, which was adopted in 2014 by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and developed by multiple stakeholders within the Umpqua Basin.

According to ODFW officials, the ‘sliding scale’ makes adjustments to wild fish harvest opportunities based on the North and South Umpqua River population numbers.

ODFW Collecting Steelhead Snouts Locations around Umpqua Basin

Story by Scooter Brown

Roseburg OR – Winter steelhead anglers are asked to return snouts from hatchery steelhead harvested in the Umpqua River basin. ODFW will scan the snouts for coded wire tags in the first of a multi-year research project to improve winter steelhead fishing in the South Umpqua River.

Anglers can deposit snouts in collection barrels at various boat ramps around Douglas County. Bags and tags with date and location of harvest are in the barrels. The barrels are set up around popular fishing spots on the North Umpqua, South Umpqua and mainstem Umpqua Rivers. These locations include Scott Creek, Sawyer’s Place, Elkton, Osprey and James Woods boat launches and the ODFW office in Roseburg. The barrels also have little paper tags and pencils. The tags and pencils are for anglers to mark down when they caught it, an approximate size of the fish, their name and their contact information. Entries are submitted into a monthly drawing for a gift card to Sportsman’s Warehouse.

Fish were coded wire tagged in February 2018 and released in March and April from the Rock Creek and Cole Rivers hatcheries in Canyonville. Any of those fish returning this steelhead angling season are considered “one salt fish” after spending one year in the ocean. This citizen science project collects information on the winter steelhead fishery including number of fish harvested, whether they are wild or hatchery, and fishing effort. This information will be used in conjunction with the coded wire tag data to better manage the hatchery fishery.

ODFW STEP biologist Evan Leonetti said the agency will use the data collected from anglers and coded wire tags to adjust hatchery release timing to improve future hatchery winter steelhead fishing, particularly in the South Umpqua River.

“Getting the data from the coded wire tags will help us determine which releases have better returns for anglers. These fish were all in the four to five-inch range when released in Canyonville,” Leonetti said. They take the juvenile steelhead from the hatchery, implant the tag into their snout, then release the fish from their acclimation site in Canyonville. Those fish migrate out to the ocean, grow up and return in one to three years.

Leonetti is also asking for volunteers to interview winter steelhead anglers on the North and South Umpqua rivers. Volunteers can work a very flexible schedule and will be stationed at boat ramps throughout the two basins. Leonetti is looking for people with flexible schedules, that enjoy talking with anglers. He is also asking volunteers to assist with the collection of snouts. Volunteers must provide their own transportation and may be working alone or with a partner. The project runs the length of the winter steelhead season, ending about mid-April.

Anyone over the age of 18 who is interested in volunteering should call Leonetti at 541-464-2175 or email evan.leonetti@state.or.us or anyone interested in volunteering to handle fish, in Canyonville, contact Levi Simmons at 541-464-2157.

Veterans Corner

Deported Veteran returns after 17 years

Hector Lopez has been on the front lines in the battle to get all Deported Veterans returned for many years.

He helped run an office in downtown Tijuana to locate and help the vets who were struggling to stay alive. He was finally able to secure a humanitarian pass to help his ailing mother in Madera. Not exactly a full return of his US citizenship, yet but it was a crack in the wall of bs and he is now home.

Victor Hinojosa, who lives in Rosarito Mexico, a founder of supporter of returning the Veterans, drove Hector and his wife home. He is still going through all the paper work to be sure he can get Hector all the help he needs at the local VA.

All the returning Veterans face the same PTSD problems as somebody who was a POW.

Bring Deported Veterans Home!

Oregon Gray Wolves moving West and South

There are now about 200 gray wolves in Oregon

Story by Scooter Brown



The breeding male of the Chesnimnus Pack is caught on camera during the winter survey on U.S. Forest Service land in northern Wallowa County in December 2018. (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife)

State biologists say Oregon’s gray wolf population may have reached its ecological limit in the eastern third of the state and that packs will probably spread out to the west and south in greater numbers. Those comments, made at a meeting of the state Fish and Wildlife Commission, came as Colorado released five wolves trapped from Oregon as part of a historic reintroduction program.

Roblyn Brown, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s wolf coordinator, told ranchers and conservationists in December 2023, that about 200 gray wolves in nearly 25 packs call Oregon home. She said their numbers have leveled off in recent years because most wolves live in northeast Oregon, an area that’s becoming crowded for the species. Wolves first recolonized their native habitat there in 2009 after hunting and harassment eradicated them from Oregon for 50 years.

The wildlife agency counted 178 wolves in the state in 2022, up from 175 in 2021 and 173 in 2020, though officials say that’s an undercount. Their numbers have plateaued in recent years after spiking for a decade. Wolves packs have taken root in central and southwestern Oregon, including a pack in Jackson County that has become notorious for preying on cattle.

“We’re going to start seeing a lot more wolves over the next few years in other areas of Oregon,” Brown said.

But conservationists are concerned that the agency is killing more wolves as packs prey more and more on livestock. Illegal kills also continue to plague wolf packs. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a \$26,500 reward for information leading to convictions for two separate wolf slayings in November, including one in Jackson County. Wolf hunting is illegal in Oregon, and the Jackson County wolf was protected under the federal Endangered Species Act, like all others in central and western Oregon.

In a recent Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting, Brown reported that a sustained wolf population is “a big accomplishment.” She went on to say that almost 90% of adult wolves survived year-to-year in Oregon, a much higher rate than Western states, including Idaho and Montana, where authorized mass wolf hunts are common. Both states have much higher numbers of wolves than Oregon.

Derek Broman, the agency’s game program manager, said that some environmental challenges expected to plague Oregon wolves haven’t been issues after all. Conservationists had been concerned about a lack of genetic diversity among different wolf packs, which could make wolves more susceptible to canine diseases and disruptions in their environment.

“Some of those conservation threats are not what they were five years ago,” Broman said.

John Williams of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association said that trust is growing between ranchers and wildlife managers thanks to a

more efficient process of investigating kills of livestock. This is a source of concern for a small group of ranchers who have lost cattle, sheep and goats. The agency is also streamlining its process for approving the killing of predatory wolves, he said.

“We’re encouraged by the direction,” he told the commission.

The Oregon Legislature this year also released \$1 million more to compensate ranchers for livestock losses, more than in any year since lawmakers created the state program in 2011, according to Capital Press.

After hearing from wildlife officials, ranchers, hunters and conservationists, the commission decided not to reform the state’s wolf management plan, a hard-fought set of rules and regulations that took four years to hammer out due to disagreements about state-approved wolf kills and attacks on livestock, of which are both on the rise. Investigators confirmed that wolves killed 76 privately-owned livestock last year, compared to 16 in 2019.

ODFW has authorized the killing of 16 wolves so far this year, according to the Western Environmental Law Center, a conservation advocacy group. That’s up from an average of less than four wolves each year from 2019 to 2022. The agency killed six gray wolves in six weeks this summer, to the anger of conservationists. Sristi Kamal, deputy director of the Western Environmental Law Center, said the wildlife agency is over-relying on legal wolf killings to protect livestock.

“They are now choosing very heavily to engage in lethal,” she said.

Holly Tuers-Lance, a state wolf biologist, said that preying on livestock is a learned skill for some wolves and that two-thirds of wolf packs in Oregon aren’t known to do so.

According to the agency’s data, just eight livestock producers experienced half of all known livestock predations. She said that data helps wolf managers be deliberate about where to reduce conflict between wolves and communities.

ODFW claims they only authorize the killing of a wolf when a rancher documents no less than two incidents of livestock predation within nine months, and only after other methods have failed to deter wolves, such as building fencing, enlisting livestock dogs or guarding cattle.

Additionally, wolves are off-limits for lethal removal in most of the state because packs outside eastern Oregon are protected by the federal Endangered Species Act.

Tuers-Lance said the federal law prevents the agency from additional efforts to protect livestock from the Rogue wolf pack in southern Oregon, which has preyed on livestock more than 60 times from 2016 to 2022. She said experiments with non-lethal deterrents and new technology haven’t worked, and ranchers are spending “unsustainable amounts of time trying to prevent conflict.”