

Shitike Creek salmon count on the rise

5-year project helps tribes meet fisheries goal

By Shannon Keaveny
Spilyay Tymoo

Bob Spateholts and his crew lay on their bellies in their snorkeling gear while slowly swimming upstream in Shitike Creek.

"We're counting juveniles and we're snorkeling because it's easier on the creek's ecosystem," explains Spateholts, fish production biologist for the tribes.

Spateholts and his crew are employees of a 5-year salmon supplementation project, designed to help the tribes achieve their goal of having 300 chinook salmon per year returning to Shitike Creek.

"Our goal is to enhance the population to a point where there are enough adult salmon returning to Shitike Creek for a

harvest," said Spateholts.

The project, funded by the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, is in its third year. The project is a collaboration between the tribes and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which operates the Warm Springs Fish Hatchery and monitors the interactions between hatchery and wild fish. The hatchery, because of good salmon returns, provides salmon for the supplementation project.

For the past three years adult returning hatchery spring chinook salmon have been outplanted annually into the Shitike Creek at five locations to supplement natural production.

The salmon, carefully selected, have genetic characteristics of wild fish. Some examples of the characteristics the biologists look for are time of spawning, size of smolts, and when they return.

"We use wild fish in the hatchery as rootstock to maintain genetics," explained Spateholts.

While counting juvenile salmon, Spateholts and his crew also count bull trout, rainbow trout and steelhead juveniles to make sure their numbers are maintained.

It's possible that too much competition could be created for habitat, food and other resources. Disease could also be brought in by the hatchery fish, although they are tested for disease before being released.

"If the hatchery fish outcompete the natural fish populations, the project could have a negative effect," explained Spateholts.

In July of 2000 salmon juveniles were first counted in the creek. In the fall of 2001, nearly 200 salmon were released there. In 2002, only 80 were released

due a disease concern at the hatchery. This fall an additional 200 will be released into the creek.

Due to these efforts, juvenile salmon counts were up nearly 10 tenfold by 2001. By the year 2002, biologists were seeing juvenile salmon counts in the Shitike Creek that were similar to healthy non-supplemented streams. This year jack salmon (third-year salmon) are being monitored, as the first year of adult salmon return since the project's inception in 2000.

"For every jack salmon, there are eighteen 4- and 5-year salmon. So this year should give us some indication of what next year's count will be. Next year should be big," said Spateholts.

The juvenile counts for this year are anticipated to be a bit lower because of the reduced release in 2002.

"But it's still much higher

than prior to year 2000," said Spateholts. "Shitike Creek's spawning activity has gone up from less than 30 salmon per year to 30 to 80 salmon per year," he said.

The creek's fish populations suffered greatly from fish blockage created by the Headworks dam, installed in the 1970s. Other contributing factors to lower salmon counts were severe floods in both 1964 and 1996. As a result of the floods, the stream was bulldozed and then channeled, but the stream's capability to support fish populations was reduced. Another factor that reduced fish counts in Shitike Creek was the drought of the late 1990s.

"The salmon need some help to recover. What we are doing is kind of like a jumpstart," said Spateholts.

Bill signed for tribal juvenile court transfer

By Shannon Keaveny
Spilyay Tymoo

Gov. Kulongoski signed a bill in June that will allow Jefferson County to officially transfer off-reservation tribal juvenile court cases to the reservation court system.

Senate Bill 882 is the first of its kind in Oregon and, if successful, could serve as a national model.

The bill authorizes Jefferson County to negotiate a memorandum of understanding with the tribes on how cases will be transferred.

Negotiations for an MOU are presently under way and are anticipated to be finished in the next two to three months, said Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge Daniel Ahern.

Most cases transferred will be minor offenses, such as possession of drugs and alcohol, and shoplifting charges, explained Judge Ahern.

"The district attorney has strong feelings that cases transferred shouldn't involve violent crimes," said Judge Ahern.

Also, it is likely that cases will be transferred where both parties involved are tribal youth.

One goal of the bill is to make the court system more efficient by making the court more accessible.

"It is a 15-mile drive to Madras from the reservation versus a few blocks to the courthouse in Warm Springs," said Judge Ahern.

Judge Ahern explained the concept of the bill is similar to transferring court cases to different counties, based on where the defendant resides.

Judge Ahern also said, because of cultural differences, tribal youth may be more receptive to complying with orders from a tribal judge.

Tribal court penalties are often similar to off-reservation court penalties but differences, such as time with an elder, may be included.

"Some crimes are best dealt with using our culture and traditions," explained Warm Springs Tribal Judge Lola Sohapp. The tribes, said Judge Sohapp, have specific customs to address specific problems, such as fighting or stealing.

But for some more serious crimes, such as violent crimes, the tribes do not have resources to address, and the cost is too great.

In these cases, our options are limited and it is better to handle it off-reservation, explained Judge Sohapp.

Before being transferred, the tribal court must accept juvenile court cases and permission from the tribal juvenile's legal guardian must be obtained.

Tribal youth juvenile court cases in which the offense has happened off-reservation have been transferred in the past, said tribal attorney Howard Arnette.

But there was growing concern with Jefferson County judges that they did not have that authorization, explained Arnette.

"It just needed to be formalized to avoid complications," said Arnette. Judge Sohapp said in the past few years fewer cases were being transferred so the tribal court felt the bill was necessary.

Immersion camp: hope in younger generation

(Continued from page 1)

Language revitalization on the reservation lately has been inspired by and modeled after a successful total immersion program of the Native people of Hawaii.

Language studies throughout the world have shown that total immersion is the most effective way to learn another language.

Wilson Wewa Jr., a Paiute language consultant at the camp, explained how he became semi-fluent in his language, Numu.

"The only reason I became fluent is because I went to a place where I spoke my language everyday," he said.

According to Wewa, there is no one under the age of 50 who fluently speaks one of the three Native languages of the reservation.

He estimates that for the Numu language, there are only three or four elders who are fluent. The same is true of Kiksht.

For Sahaptin, he guesses, there can't be more than 60 fluent speakers.

But there seems to be hope for the next generation.

Six-year-old Revonne Johnson speaks in full Kiksht sentences to her grandmother Gladys Thompson, who is fluent in the language.

Johnson, who attended the immersion camp, has been learn-



Margaret Boise is a fluent Was'qu speaker and teacher at the immersion camp.

ing the language most of her life. Her two older cousins, Teryl Florendo and Charice Johnson,

also attended the camp. They say their young cousin speaks better than they do.

"By explaining what this camp meant to the people, and that it was always full of people, we can bring back those cultural memories."

Adeline Miller

"When she talks, our grandma understands her," said Florendo.

Still there is a rush to revitalize the languages before it is too late.

"Let's just say bringing back our language is a long-term hurried goal, because there isn't much time," said Wewa.

Total physical response

Language lessons at the camp included a method called "total physical response," a means of teaching by action.

Basic lessons, like how to set a table, were also included. Children played games. Throughout the weekend traditional meals were served and elders told traditional stories in their Native language.

The HeHe longhouse was chosen as a location because it has long been a place of meeting for important cultural events for the tribes.

Adeline Miller, a language consultant at the camp, remembers coming to HeHe as a child

and seeing dozens of camps lining the riverbanks as tribal members prepared for the Huckleberry Feast.

"I think having the camp here is one way of breaking through to the youngsters," said Miller.

"By explaining what this camp meant to the people, and that it was always full of people, we can bring back those cultural memories. We can fill the gap that was totally forgotten, so the younger generation is interested in learning their language again."

Speakers from Burns

The language camp at HeHe included two special guests, Myrtle Louie Peck and Ruth Lewis.

They are Paiute speakers who traveled to the immersion camp from Burns.

"They brought language lessons and legends to our program," said Pat Miller, local instructor of the Paiute language.

The visitors from Burns also explained to students how it came to be that some people in Burns are related to people of the Warm Springs Reservation. And they got to meet some young relatives they had never met before.

"It was very interesting and fun," said Miller.

Tribes state case for continued BPA funds

Tribal mitigation lands gain support from the Northwest Power Planning Council for continued Bonneville Power Administration funds

By Shannon Keaveny
Spilyay Tymoo

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs had an opportunity to state their case to the Northwest Power Planning Council last week during a meeting at Kah-Nee-Ta High Desert Resort and Casino.

Tribal representatives asked for the Power Planning Council's support to ensure that the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) does not reduce funding for fish and wildlife restoration projects on the reservation and ceded lands.

"The funding support of BPA has been a foundation of the tribes' effort to protect and enhance water, fish and wildlife resources and habitats over the past 20 plus years," Terry Luther, Warm Springs Fish and Wildlife manager, said to the council.

The council responded by

asking Warm Springs to provide the exact financial numbers needed to get the correct funding.

Due to an internal budget crisis, BPA has threatened to cut a large portion of their funding for mitigation projects in the Columbia River Basin.

The BPA has already cut "carryover funds" from the previous year, which they have never done before, Luther said after the meeting.

"We ended up with half the money we expected to have for our mitigation lands," explained Luther.

The tribes feel these funds are both an obligation under the Treaty of 1855, ensuring protection of their cultural resources, and BPA's legal obligation to mitigate for resource impacts.

"Our goal was to get the council's attention that the BPA was not funding mitigation projects adequately and to make sure the BPA fulfills its mitigation requirements," said Luther.

He said he felt the tribes' objective had been achieved.

"We ended up with half the money we expected to have for our mitigation lands."

Terry Luther
Fish and Wildlife manager

The Confederated Tribes have acquired four fish and wildlife mitigation properties on ceded lands through BPA funding. The four properties - Pine Creek, Wagner, Oxbow and Forrest - consist of over 38,000 acres.

According to Luther, the properties are critical sites for salmon spawning, threatened species protection, wildlife recovery and habitat connectivity in Oregon.

Without BPA funding many of the restoration efforts cannot continue.

"We are currently struggling to get adequate funding to support these mitigation projects," said Luther.

In addition, fish and hydrology studies, with the assistance of BPA funding, have been conducted on several reservation

streams.

As a result, projects have been designed and implemented to remove fish barriers, improve in-stream habitats, restore and protect riparian conditions and improve upland conditions.

These projects have increased fish counts, said Luther.

The Northwest Power Act directs the council to prepare a plan for the Northwest to assure the region an adequate, efficient, economical and reliable power supply.

The act also directs the agency to plan for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of fish and wildlife, including spawning and rearing grounds of the Columbia River and its tributaries - rivers that have been impacted by

the construction and operation of hydroelectric dams.

A Northwest Power Plan and the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program is produced and updated periodically through an intensive public involvement process.

Federal agencies that manage hydropower facilities in the Columbia River Basin are required by law to take the plan and program into account in decision-making.

The Northwest Power Planning Council is an agency of the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

The council was created under the authority of federal law.

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