

Concern was lamprey's ability to pass through barriers

**LAMPREY continued
from front page**

"When you could literally pick fish off of a wall 200 years ago, it was a pretty special deal to Tribes," Dirksen said.

Tribal Council member Jack Giffen Jr. has been encouraging the Natural Resources Department in its efforts.

"This is awesome news," he said of the recent discovery. "I was excited. Our crew stepped up and started transplanting lamprey. There have probably been 100 different studies, but our Natural Resources Department is out doing something about recovery. I fully support however they decide to go about it."

Natural Resources' research project, with the help of Army Corps of Engineers biologists Douglas Garletts and Chad Helms, sought to answer if lamprey planted above the Fall Creek Reservoir could survive the winter, successfully spawn, rear successfully in Fall Creek and if juveniles could make their way out of the reservoir during the seasonal drawdown.

Due to declining levels of Pacific lamprey, the fish was listed as a federal species of concern and has been studied by a workgroup of federal, state and Tribal agencies.

The discovery of juvenile lamprey migrating out of the reservoir coincidentally came just before a five-year Pacific Lamprey Conservation Agreement policy review conference held in Portland. The group includes officials from various Tribes, as well as biologists and others from governmental agencies.

"It was incredibly helpful to make our case that the juvenile lamprey could rear in the stream," Wakeland said. "They were able to spawn, reproduce and rear. It was a suitable habitat."

At the conference, one of the biggest areas of concern regarding lamprey was difficulty in passage through barriers, such as dams. For example, there are 13 dams in the Willamette River Basin that



Courtesy photo by Terri Berling

Tribal Fish and Wildlife Program Manager Kelly Dirksen recently announced that juvenile lamprey are migrating out of Fall Creek Reservoir, which is located about 20 miles southeast of Eugene. The lamprey, this one included, are believed to have been spawned from adult lamprey that were transplanted above Fall Creek by the Tribe's Natural Resources Department.

block more than 400 miles of viable stream habitat and make lamprey recovery difficult.

Natural Resources Department findings demonstrate that these obstacles can be overcome.

"This is a step in the right direction to say that maybe those 400 miles are not off-limits," Dirksen said. "This is a research project, but also advancing recovery of the fish. This is the first time in 50 years lamprey have been at Fall Creek since the dam was built in 1967, and it is all because of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde ... I think it shows the Tribe's leadership on this issue and is a great success in Grand Ronde's ceded lands. This moves from a research project to actually increasing the production of lamprey."

The project will be continuing until 2020 to capture the full seven-year lifespan of the lamprey.

"We have one more year of moving the fish and we hope to narrow down what they are doing to migrate out and see if it can be applied to other reservoirs," Dirksen said. "The (Willamette) Falls is a critical piece for the Tribe, as both a historic and cultural site."

Pacific lamprey 5-year review

During the Portland conference, various Tribal and governmental representatives talked about their commitment to lamprey recovery.

Grand Ronde Tribal member Bryan Mercier leads the Fish and Wildlife Program for the Bonneville Power Administration.

"My dad was a Kalapuya descendant and my first job was in Grand Ronde digging trail as a Youth Crew member," he said. "I have come full circle to be in this position of influence at Bonneville. I am here today to reaffirm the commitment to the lamprey partnership. We have lots of staff dedicated to this mission who have lots of passion ... I hope we can continue to be frank and straight with each other."

Ceded Lands Program Manager Michael Karnosh said that knowledge is important, but he agrees with the sentiment that the group can't "study the lamprey to death."

"I want to emphasize applying the knowledge toward seeking results," Karnosh said. "We know upstream

and downstream passage are problems. We are learning more about that with each project and also we appreciate all of the partners that have come together today."

Conference participants included Tribal representatives from Oregon, Washington, California and Alaska, along with officials from the Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, the Institute for Tribal Government, Pacific Lamprey Fish Habitat Partnership, National Fish Habitat Partnership and Western Fishes, among others.

"It is fair to say we learned a lot and been convinced of the value of this species," Mercier said. "The lessons we have learned about the importance of lamprey contributed to the funding of it ... this is the right thing to do."

Some of the Tribal representatives said that educating youth about the cultural importance of lamprey is crucial to ensuring its survival.

"Our younger people today can't seem to visualize the life we had as younger people," said Warm Springs Tribal representative Bruce Jim. "But it was part of our growing up in our culture. We grew up in moccasins and running around barefoot. To see that disappear in our lifetimes is sad. Today, we are here to talk about the lamprey. But we don't need to be sitting here 10 years in the future, saying this is what used to be here in these rivers. Teach your children the law of the land." ■

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