ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
June 10, 2016

EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Upper Klamath Lake Redband Trout

Upper Klamath Lake is home to large, migratory redband trout. To help better understand the ecology and needs of these unique fish, ODFW, Oregon State University (OSU) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have teamed up to study their use of Upper Klamath Lake. Specifically, our study will try to identify habitats and water conditions these fish use during summer when Klamath Lake water quality degrades.

As part of this study, 40 large redband trout (20 to 30 inches in length) were radio tagged with Lotek water temperature transmitters. Radio tags were surgically inserted into trout by USGS staff from Cook, Washington, and Klamath ODFW Staff. In addition, staff hope to PIT tag about 200 fish to prove a more economical way to monitor their movement. Most of the radio tracking and PIT tag recovery will be done by OSU and Klamath Community College students.

It is hoped this study will shed light on the effect of recent Upper Klamath Lake wetland habitat restoration on these fish and help inform future

restoration efforts. It will also help local ODFW staff better advice our tribal and agency cooperators as well as anglers about the habits and needs of these fish.

In addition to OSU, USGS and Klamath Community College, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Klamath Tribes, Bureau of Land Management, Clear Water Bio Studies, Trout Unlimited and many of our Upper Klamath Lake anglers have pitched in to help with this study.

Experimental Malheur River Spring Chinook Fishery

ODFW and Burns Paiute Tribe (BPT) staff have worked together to create an experimental upper Malheur River Chinook fishery this year. The fishery will occur on the upper Malheur River about 40 miles northeast of Burns in an area where BPT tribal members historically fished. Salmon and steelhead migration to this area was blocked last century by the construction of a number of Snake and Malheur basin dams.

Developing this fishery has been a priority for the BPT for some time. It will provide an opportunity for tribal members to exercise their heritage and non-tribal anglers to experience a unique salmon fishery.

This year we plan to release up to 200 adult Willamette Chinook salmon from Dexter Fish Hatchery into the upper Malheur River. These fish will be stocked in two releases planned for the end of May and middle of June.

Tribal Chinook fishers will be governed by the BPT fishing code, non-tribal anglers by the 2016 sport fishing regulations. The fishery will occur from stocking to August 15, 2016.

ODFW District, Region and Headquarters staff and BPT Natural Resource program worked with National Marine Fisheries Service, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. U. S. Forest Service, Grant and Harney County Courts and local communities to bring about this fishing opportunity.

WEST REGION

Steve Marx, Region Manager

Winter Steelhead Spawning Ground Counts - The ODFW Oregon Adult Salmonid Inventory and Sampling (OASIS) project is nearing the completion of the 14th consecutive year of annual winter steelhead (StW) monitoring. This monitoring currently occurs in the Oregon Coast Distinct population segment (DPS) at the monitoring area (MA) scale, as well as within the Southwest Washington and Lower Columbia Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) at the population scale.

The project is designed to assess yearly status and trend, abundance, proportion of hatchery fish, and distribution of winter steelhead spawners by conducting surveys on randomly selected sites spread across the winter steelhead spawning habitat. Redd counts are converted to adult steelhead spawners based on calibration work conducted in a number of basins across the Oregon Coast from 1998 - 2002. The information gathered by this project is used for policy development and management decisions, as addressed in the Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Plan and the Lower Columbia Conservation and Recovery Plan. These surveys take place on private, corporate and public lands, and would not be possible without the cooperation of a wide range of individuals and organizations spread across much of western Oregon.

Final estimates for 2016 will be available in the fall, but preliminary results show that redd densities in 2016 have generally been slightly higher than the previous five-year average, but about normal when compared to the last 14 years (Figure 1). Abundance trends in Winter Steelhead populations typically vary by geographic area, and this appears to be true for 2016. For example, by early May redd densities in the Mid-Coast are the highest on-record, but 2016 redd densities in the Umpqua are among the lowest observed since 2003. The timing of StW spawning activity in most areas appears to be slightly earlier than average, but is within the normal range.

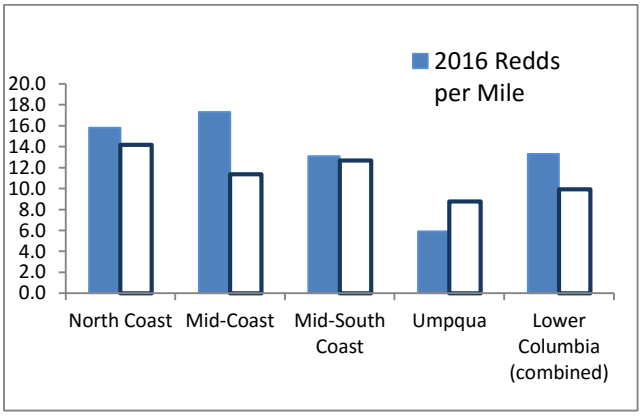


Figure 1. The rate of steelhead redds/mile observed in 2016 surveys within the Oregon Coast and selected Oregon tributaries of the Lower Columbia River. The five-year average redds/mile is also shown.

International natural resource professionals – ODFW staff met with 13 high-level Columbian professionals last month in the ODFW Central Point office to discuss management issues. Russ Stauff, Rogue Watershed Manager, discussed state fish and wildlife management issues with the group of visiting Columbian natural resource policy makers and attorneys. The meeting provided an excellent opportunity to share information on wildlife management activities and challenges in Oregon.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Rick Hargrave, Administrator

The division had a focused marketing campaign to increase the sale of controlled hunt applications and premium hunts. Overall, the campaign was successful. Sales of controlled hunts were only down 384 applications from last year. Premium hunt sales exceeded projections by nearly 50K and generated $552,400 in new revenue. Below is a summary of the Controlled Hunt & Premium Hunt Promotional Efforts:

- 4 Seminars
    - Portland and Central Oregon Sportsmen's Shows
    - Tualatin Cabela's
    - Albany Sportsman's Warehouse
- Social Media
    - 5 standard Facebook posts:
        - It's officially the Last Minute post – 11,143 people reached, 111 likes, 66 comments and 77 shares
        - Less than a week left to sign up for controlled hunts post – 17,311 people reached, 255 likes, 77 comments and 111 shares 278 link clicks
        - Controlled Hunt Reminder post – 2,450 people reached, 73 likes, 16 shares and 4 link clicks
        - Top 5 Controlled Hunt Tips post – 2,246 people reached, 13 likes, 0 comments, 7 shares and 1 link click
        - Have you applied for a controlled hunt yet? post – 7,568 people reached, 153 likes, 43 comments, 83 shares and 5 link clicks
    - Facebook Ads and Boosted posts –
        - Another Important Deadline Coming up for Big Game Hunters – 656 engagements, 16,833 people reached, cost per engagement 0.08 cents – May 3 – May 8
        - Five ways to increase your chances of getting a controlled hunt – 36,448 people reached, 593 likes, 189 shares and 44 comments – April 15 – 26
        - Less than a week left until the controlled hunt – 787 engagements, 14,328 people reached, cost per engagement 0.04 cents – May 10 – 15.
    - 12+ Tweets
- News Releases
    - Potentially reached more than 81K people thru print circulation and more than 3.2 million people in online news coverage
- Recreation Report
- Feature Story on front page of website
- Targeted Emails
    - Email: CH hunt application deadline May 15
        - Target: Customers with emails that applied in 14-15 but not in 16
        - # recipients: 34,508
        - Unique opens: 14,299
        - Unique clicks: 3,656
    - Email: Premium hunt information
        - Target: non-resident and uniform services applicants with emails
        - # recipients: 7,806
        - Unique opens: 4,406
        - Unique clicks: 1,279
- Email: Youth controlled hunt opportunities
    - Target: Parents of 15-16 hunter education graduates with emails
    - # recipients: 5,454
    - Unique opens: 1,996
    - Unique clicks: 568
- Controlled Hunts online course

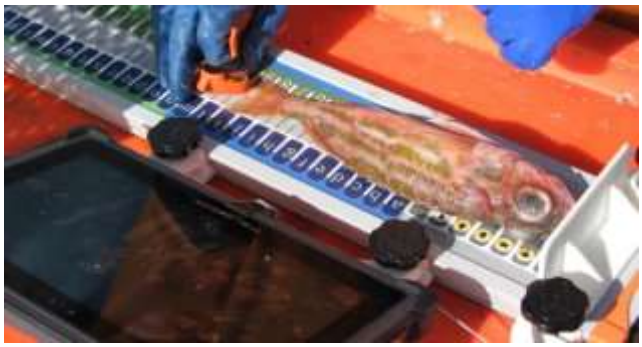
MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Caren Braby, Marine Resources Program Manager

Marine Port Biologists go electronic

Marine Port Biologists sample commercial fishery landings to track species harvest in Oregon. Our responsible management decisions depend on accurate and timely data from this sampling and tracking. "Sampling" in this context means taking a small portion of the catch to document the species, measure fish lengths, fish weights and take

biological samples such as ear bones for aging and gonads for maturity estimation, to better understand the breeding cycle. After working up samples in the field at fish processing facilities, port biologists then come back to the office and enter data into databases so the information can be integrated into state-wide (and then coastwide) estimates of landings.



Electronic measuring board in development

With commercial deliveries of marine fish and shellfish into Oregon nearing or even exceeding 30,000 each year, developing efficiencies in sampling is extremely valuable. So, what's new? Our port biologists are leading the charge, in collaboration with Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, to bring electronic fish measuring boards to our work, which will save time in the field but most especially will eliminate data entry back at the office. The magnetically activated boards stream data into a paired tablet, and use an application that is specific to ODFW and Oregon species. The equipment and methods are in trial service now and are scheduled for first real use in July, in side-by-side trials with our standard methods in Astoria and Charleston. If successful, this method will be expanded to cover additional ports and possibly for other fishery sectors. With these efficiencies, we improve our accuracy and near real-time availability of information to better manage our harvest in-season and over time.

2016 record razor harvest

Over the last two years, the Clatsop beaches have been home to very large razor clam sets, which have meant record levels of harvest and harvesters in 2016. A normal year for total harvest is about 1.3 million clams (10-year average; ~85% sport harvest). In 2016 and just for harvest estimates through mid-May, harvest has reached 2.1 million clams; there are still two months left in the season.

Harvesters on Clatsop Beach

One damper on harvest may be if we see Harmful Algal Blooms develop and biotoxins accumulate in the clams. In anticipation of such an event, MRP is working with the Oregon Department of Agriculture to monitor biotoxin levels in razors and other shellfish species (crab, mussels), and will close fisheries when biotoxin levels are too high. Without such a bloom, and at current harvest rates, we may exceed a total harvest of 3 million clams this year – only about 19% of the standing stock, as measured by our stock assessment in 2015.

For the time being, monitor the Shellfish Hotline before you go, but be ready for more record harvesting activity on Oregon's north coast.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

Below are some recent examples of Oregon State Police enforcement efforts focusing on sturgeon protection in the Willamette Zone.
A Portland Fish and Wildlife Sergeant responded to a report of two people in a boat on the Willamette River near Gladstone, Oregon who had caught and retained two undersize sturgeon. Sturgeon retention on the lower Willamette River is prohibited. The boat was located and eventually contacted after it motored to a nearby boat launch. The anglers were in possession of two sturgeon (one undersize and one legal size sturgeon had the season been open). The smaller sturgeon was released into the Willamette River and the second sturgeon was donated to charity. Both men were issued citations for **Take/Possession of Sturgeon**.

A St. Helens Fish and Wildlife Trooper observed two individuals angling in the Gilbert River at night. Using night vision, the Trooper observed an angler catch a three foot long sturgeon, while a second subject assisted in removing the hook from the sturgeon as they pulled it onto the bank. Upon contact, the angler was found to be using barbed hooks. The other subject initially provided a false name and was found to be angling without a license. The first angler was cited criminally for **Unlawful Take/Possession of a Sturgeon** and **Angling Prohibited Method – Barbed Hooks,** while the second angler was cited criminally for **Aiding in a Wildlife Offense, False Information to Police,** and **No Resident Angling License**

A St. Helens Fish and Wildlife Trooper responded to Scappoose Bay Marina after receiving information from an ODFW employee regarding subjects retaining a sturgeon. Upon arrival, the Trooper witnessed one subject yelling at the ODFW fish checker, and the man continued to be confrontational with the Trooper during the investigation. The sturgeon was seized and donated to the Scappoose Senior Center, and a citation was issued for **Unlawful Possession of Sturgeon**.

St. Helens Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted surveillance on the Gilbert River and witnessed two men catch three sturgeon and place the fish in a shallow pond nearby. The men later returned to the pond and removed one of the sturgeon and left the area. The suspect vehicle was stopped and a large cut up sturgeon in a backpack was discovered. The men were issued criminal citations for **Unlawful Take/Possession of Sturgeon x3**. The recovered sturgeon was donated to the Scappoose Senior Center.

A Portland Fish and Wildlife Trooper responded to a complaint of two subjects who caught and retained a sturgeon while fishing on the Willamette River in downtown Portland. The Trooper located the fisherman as well as a sturgeon approximately 36" long, tied up in a bag and hidden in the bushes. One subject was subsequently issued a criminal citation for **Unlawful Take/Possession of Sturgeon** and the other was criminally cited for **Aiding in a Wildlife Offense.**

A Portland Fish and Wildlife Trooper investigated reports of a subject on social media with a sturgeon. Investigation revealed the subject caught and retained a 52" sturgeon from a closed area of the Willamette River, then posted pictures and video of himself with the fish on Facebook. The subject was subsequently issued a citation for **Take/Possession of Sturgeon** and the processed meat was seized as evidence.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

On April 14, 2016 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced that the West Coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the Pacific fisher did not require the protection of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The West Coast DPS was proposed for listing under the ESA in October 2014, based on potential habitat threats and impacts of rodenticides. However, the USFWS's evaluation of this DPS indicated that these threats are not causing significant impacts or declines and the DPS of fisher does not face the risk of extinction now or in the foreseeable future. In response to the proposed listing, numerous efforts were implemented to increase the understanding and conservation of fisher. Non-federal landowners will soon have the opportunity to acquire a permit from the USFWS for a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for fisher in Oregon. This agreement requires those landowners to implement conservation measures to aid in fisher conservation and in return, safeguards these landowners from additional restrictions should the fisher be listed under the federal ESA.

Numerous monitoring and research projects have also been implemented to better understand fisher populations, distribution, and habitat in Oregon. There are currently two fisher GPS-collaring studies and over a dozen surveys underway throughout the Cascades and southwest Oregon made possible by partnerships of state, federal, academic, private landowners, and non-government organizations. Many of these same individuals and groups are a part of the newly formed Oregon Forest Carnivore Working Group that assists in directing fisher research and conservation in Oregon.

Although the fisher is not being listed under the federal ESA, fisher are still listed as a Strategy Species in the Oregon Conservation Strategy. The ODFW will continue to focus on this species and collaborate with partners to conserve and improve fisher populations in Oregon.

END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR
June 10, 2016