

CANADIAN OKANAGAN BASIN TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

C/O Department of Fisheries and Oceans
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January 27, 2014

Portland District,
US Army Corps of Engineers
NWP PM-E Fisheries

ATTN: Jon Rerecich

RE: 14BON02 FGE Program Gatewell Velocity Testing

The Canadian Okanagan Basin Technical Working Group (COBTWG) has concerns regarding the proposed non-routine operations and maintenance at the PH2 gatewells. The proposed schedule for high-flows (June 2 – 10, 2014) has the potential to severely impact migrating Sockeye Salmon smolts originating from the Okanagan system. COBTWG has been implementing significant stock and habitat restoration work (e.g. maintenance of fish-friendly flows in the Okanagan River and reintroduction of sockeye to Skaha Lake) in the Okanagan Basin since 2003. Subsequently, Okanagan sockeye smolts originating from Canada now comprise no less than 80% of all Columbia River sockeye smolt production and account for a similar proportion of annual adult sockeye returns to the river. We believe that the schedule as outlined could cause significant mortality for Skaha and Osoyoos Lake (hatchery and wild) stocks. Examination of the timing patterns of the aggregate of sockeye smolts passing through Bonneville Dam over the past decade, when Okanagan smolts have predominated, suggests that in a number of years 20-30% of the sockeye smolt run may pass Bonneville during the June 2 – 10 interval. Given the absence of multiple years of good tagging data, it is not possible to specifically identify what proportion of these will be of Okanagan origin but because Wenatchee smolts generally have an earlier migration, it is reasonable to suggest that the vast majority of these fish will be from the Okanagan.

In 2013, COBTWG initiated a PIT tagging program of Okanagan Sockeye smolts as part of the Skaha Sockeye Re-introduction monitoring and evaluation program. To date, it is too early to make generalizations about the run-timing of cultured Skaha sockeye in the Columbia River mainstem. However, based on previous years' PIT tag detections at Bonneville Dam, we believe the velocity tests could have a detrimental effect on both wild and hatchery sockeye smolts originating from Canadian programs.

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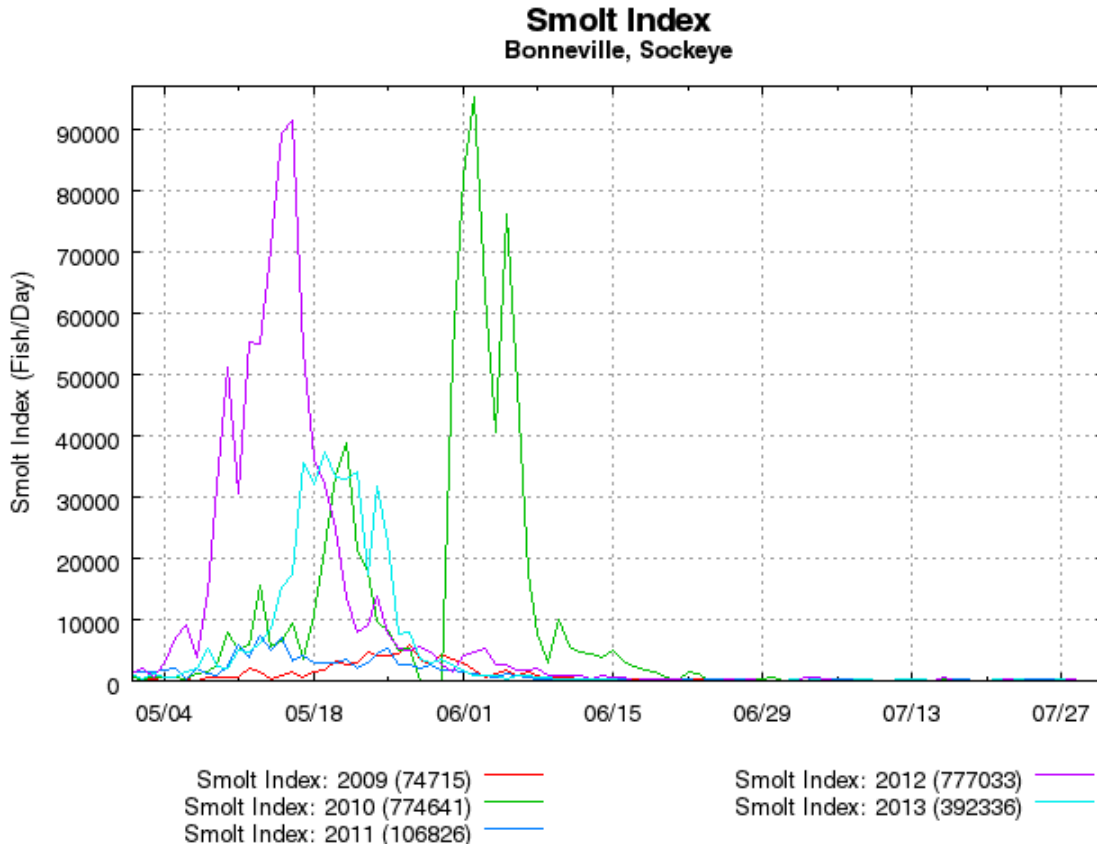
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DART Data Citation

Columbia River DART, Columbia Basin Research, University of Washington.
(2014). Available from
http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/query/smolt_graph_text

The recent Official Coordination Request for Non-Routine Operations and Maintenance stated that “juvenile sockeye may be minimally impacted during the first couple days of the high flow test period.” PIT tag data from Bonneville Dam shows that in 2010, the majority of the Sockeye run was detected from approximately May 29 to June 8. This year was also a larger than average smolt run. A delayed outmigration similar to 2010 would result in serious impact for this year’s smolt run, as the majority of smolts would pass PH2 bypass during the high-flow test window. Furthermore, de-scaling and mortality expansions conducted by the Fish Passage Center in 2012 has shown that juvenile Sockeye are disproportionally affected by PH2 gatewells compared with

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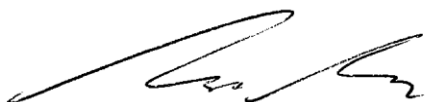
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Chinook and Steelhead. In light of FPC's mortality estimates, we believe that the impact on juvenile sockeye would be more than minimal.

COBTWG requests that the USACE amend the proposed velocity test schedule, delaying the high flow test to later in June to allow for potential delayed migration of the 2014 Sockeye smolt run.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Best regards,
Dean Allan (Chair)



Enc. Dr. Kim Hyatt, Dr. Paul Askey, Dr. Don McQueen, Richard Bussanich, Ryan Benson