

Informing natural resource policy: Climate change and salmon in the Snake River Basin

AT A GLANCE

Climate change poses risks for salmon in the Snake River Basin with or without dams.

The Situation

Climate change including longer, hotter, and dryer summers and resultant increased water temperatures in northwest rivers and streams, along with climate-change induced changes in marine environments are posing significant risks to salmon abundance and survival in the Snake River Basin and along the Pacific coast.

This situation is occurring at the same time the Inland Northwest is engaged in debate about the future of dams in the lower Snake River in Washington State. The states of Idaho, Washington and Oregon along with northwest Indian tribes derive economic, cultural and recreational benefit from salmon populations and salmon fisheries.

Addressing northwest salmon conservation will require dealing with the effects of climate change on these species and their aquatic ecosystems with or without the lower Snake River dams.

Our Response

To better inform the public, policy leaders and natural resource professionals of the risks posed by climate change to salmon stocks, we partnered with Lisa Crozier with NOAA Fisheries in Seattle to present a



Lower Salmon River near confluence with Snake River. Photo by W. A. Warren.

review of the latest science on climate change impacts to chinook salmon and steelhead in the Snake River Basin and along the Pacific coast.

The was conducted through a webinar format on July 19, 2022. The program was titled: *How climate change is affecting, and is projected to affect, ocean and freshwater conditions for chinook and steelhead on the Pacific coast and the Snake River Basin.*

Program Outcomes

There was an enthusiastic response to the program. The Lewiston Morning Tribune ran a story in the Outdoor section prior to the program and 97 people registered. Fifty people attended the live program and many more watched a video of the program posted

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online. Attendees were from states throughout the northwest.

Attendees represented over 4 million acres of managed land and reported an overall 31% increase in knowledge of the topic with 92% reporting it was a good way to learn the information and 77% said they would or probably would use the information presented.

The Future

This is the second webinar in as many years offered to a larger audience to inform stakeholders of major natural resource issues and their policy relevance.

Both programs had a positive response from stakeholders with comments indicating the strong desire for more natural resource policy-relevant programing.

The intention is to offer more of these programs in the future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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