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NOAA Fisheries Service Releases Its Final Recovery Plan for Chinook and Steelhead on the Upper Columbia River *Locally Created Plan Was Eight Years in the Making*

NOAA Fisheries Service said it was releasing its recovery plan today for two populations of salmon protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), upper Columbia spring-run Chinook salmon and upper Columbia River steelhead. Both populations have been listed under the federal species-protection law since the late 1990s, and both are currently listed as endangered.

Release of this recovery plan is the culmination of years of work by the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board, a group created in 1999 for the primary purpose of drafting a recovery plan to submit to NOAA Fisheries Service for its adoption under the ESA.

The board has a membership consisting of representatives from Chelan County, Douglas County, Okanogan County, Yakama Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

NOAA Fisheries Service regional administrator Bob Lohn praised the board in its "long, diligent effort to complete this plan."

"The contributions at the local level have been particularly gratifying," Lohn added. "Local governments, watershed councils, land owners, environmental groups and others were all enormously helpful in creating this plan with their thoughtful and constructive comments throughout the process."

A variety of additional partners, representing federal agencies, Washington state agencies, regional organizations, special purpose districts and members of the public, also participated in the recovery planning process.

Today's recovery plan, submitted in draft by the board at the end of 2005, is now the third federally approved salmon recovery plan for ESA-listed salmon in the Northwest. The others are Puget Sound Chinook and Hood Canal summer chum.

The current recovery plan says the causes for the decline of upper Columbia steelhead and spring Chinook salmon include destruction of habitat, the effects of hydroelectric operations and the impacts of hatcheries.

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The recovery plan has objective, measurable criteria to determine when these two salmon populations are no longer threatened or endangered, site-specific actions that may be needed to achieve the plan's goals and estimates of the time and costs to implement recovery actions.

The agency said that recovery plans are designed to provide a "road map" for improving the status of a protected species, so that it is no longer considered threatened or endangered and can be removed from the federal list. The agency added that while the recovery plans will by necessity be comprehensive, they will build on efforts already underway in many areas, including work being done by tribal, state, and local governments and private conservation groups.

For more details on this action, see the Web at:

<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Salmon-Recovery-Planning/Recovery-Domains/Interior-Columbia/Upper-Columbia/Upper-Col-Plan.cfm>

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