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Hopeful signs for chinook salmon runs

Bonneville Power Administration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: THURSDAY July 11, 1996

PR 48 96

PORTLAND, Ore. – The numbers are in, and the totals equal good news for Columbia River chinook salmon runs this year.

The Bonneville Power Administration's official reports for chinook salmon runs this spring indicate that the return of jacks, which are immature adult salmon, exceed the 10-year average. According to biologists, this is a critical sign because the first year in the ocean is the most important for survival. The returning jacks denote a higher ocean survival rate for chinook salmon.

"The strong number of jacks returning this year is a very encouraging sign," said Joyce Lindsay, BPA Fish and Wildlife expert. "Although jacks don't generally spawn because they have only spent a year or two in the ocean, their strong return is a positive indicator for better returns of mature fish next year."

At this time, BPA officials are unable to pinpoint the exact reasons for the higher return of jacks, although experts believe that there may be many factors that are contributing to the improved numbers – from favorable ocean conditions to extensive restoration efforts.

The total number of returning adult spring chinook salmon this spring exceeded last year's counts. Through June 13, summer counts at Bonneville Dam also were above the 1995 total for this time. The total numbers for both spring and summer chinook runs so far are about 65 percent of the 10-year average.

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