

BPA NEWS

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BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
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Millions of Columbia River salmon return home for the holidays

Portland, Ore. - The Columbia Basin's 2015 salmon season ended with a remarkable 2.3 million adult salmon passing Bonneville Dam on their up-river migration. Overall, this makes 2015 the second-strongest year for Columbia River salmon since the federal government built dams on the river nearly 80 years ago.

"We have a lot to be thankful for in the Columbia Basin," said Paul Lumley, executive director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. "This only highlights what we can accomplish as a region. Yes, there is more work to be done to address things like climate change, water quality and water temperatures, but this success provides the confidence to achieve full salmon recovery."

Approximately 954,000 fall chinook salmon made up roughly half of the 2015 run and represented the largest fall chinook return ever recorded on the Columbia, edging out the 2013 record.

Threatened Snake River fall chinook also returned in impressive numbers. Nearly 60,000 fish returned to the Snake River, the second-largest return since major dams were built on the lower Snake. In addition, approximately 20,000 wild Snake River fall chinook crossed Lower Granite Dam to spawn naturally upstream in the river's main stem and large tributaries.

"When you look at how well salmon did overall this year, it's clear the approach of restoring critical fish habitat and improving dam passage is working," says Lorri Bodi, vice president of Environment, Fish and Wildlife at the Bonneville Power Administration. "This is a direct example of partnerships with Northwest tribes, states, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council and the federal government – working together to bring more fish back to the rivers."

Not all Northwest fish runs fared well in 2015. Several weeks of unseasonable temperatures heated river water decimating this year's run of endangered Snake River sockeye salmon,



despite efforts to save them. Approximately 4,000 of the endangered salmon had passed Bonneville Dam on their way upstream, the most ever counted at Bonneville since federal recovery efforts for this run began in the 1990s.

Thankfully, conservation hatcheries established to preserve and rebuild endangered sockeye numbers served their purpose of safeguarding the genetic heritage of the species. In addition, biologists released 600 hatchery sockeye into Idaho's Redfish and Pettit Lakes to spawn naturally. Research shows offspring of sockeye spawned naturally in the lakes return at higher rates than those released from hatcheries.

Overall, the cumulative 2015 run of Columbia River salmon is one of the largest in almost eight decades, allowing anglers to catch approximately 600,000 fish.

"Federal agencies, tribes, states and other Northwest parties can be thankful that their collective efforts, in combination with strong ocean conditions, is supporting impressive numbers of returning salmon," said Michael Tehan, NOAA Fisheries' assistant regional administrator for the agency's Interior Columbia Basin Office. "That's something every citizen in our region can celebrate."

About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Ore., is a nonprofit federal power marketer that sells wholesale electricity from 31 federal dams and one nuclear plant to 142 Northwest electric utilities, serving millions of consumers and businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and parts of California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. BPA delivers power via more than 15,000 circuit miles of lines and 259 substations to 490 transmission customers. In all, BPA markets about a third of the electricity consumed in the Northwest and operates three-quarters of the region's high-voltage transmission grid. BPA also funds one of the largest fish and wildlife programs in the world, and, with its partners, pursues cost-effective energy savings and operational solutions that help maintain affordable, reliable and carbon-free electric power for the Northwest. www.bpa.gov

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