

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Salmon and Steelhead Hatchery Programs in the Duwamish-Green River Basin

Frequently Asked Questions

What is NOAA Fisheries releasing?

NOAA Fisheries is releasing a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that reviews the impacts of various alternatives for operating ten salmon and steelhead hatchery programs in the Duwamish-Green River Basin in Puget Sound. The hatchery programs are described in hatchery and genetic management plans (HGMPs) that were submitted by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and Suquamish Tribe (referred to as co-managers) for NOAA Fisheries' review and approval under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The public has an opportunity to review the draft EIS and provide comments to NOAA Fisheries during the 45-day public comment period, which closes on December 18, 2017.

What are hatchery and genetic management plans?

HGMPs are specific to the ESA. They are prepared and submitted to NOAA Fisheries for approval by the co-managers, and provide management frameworks through which the co-managers would jointly manage their hatchery operations and monitoring activities, while providing for the conservation and recovery of ESA-listed species such as Puget Sound Chinook salmon and steelhead. HGMPs outline all the details of hatchery programs, including the number and locations of fish released and the hatchery facilities that will be used to collect and spawn broodstock.

What does this draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluate?

The draft EIS takes a "big picture" look at how the ten hatchery programs affect the resources in the river basin. The draft EIS discloses potential effects, both positive and negative, from the operation of hatchery programs under a series of alternatives, including:

- Continuation of current operations, without approval of the proposed HGMPs
- Operation according to the proposed HGMPs
- Elimination of the proposed programs
- A 50-percent reduction in hatchery production under the HGMPs

The draft EIS was developed considering comments received during public scoping, and evaluates the impacts of the hatchery programs on animal and plant species (both listed and not listed under the ESA) and their habitats, water quantity and quality, socioeconomics, environmental justice resources, and cumulative effects.

How do you define a hatchery facility, hatchery program, and a hatchery and genetic management plan?

Hatchery facilities are defined as the buildings, raceways, and physical structures required for the production of hatchery fish (for example, Soos Creek Hatchery). *Hatchery programs* are the artificial production approaches, including associated facilities, that operate to produce a specific group of fish (for example, fall Chinook salmon at Soos Creek Hatchery). A hatchery facility may support one or more hatchery programs (for example, the Soos Creek Hatchery is used to produce coho salmon as well as Chinook salmon). An *HGMP*, as described above, is a document that describes how a hatchery program for a species will be implemented consistent with recovery of listed species.

What is the relationship between the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act and how do they relate to this action?

The federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and ESA address environmental values related to the impacts of a given action being proposed for implementation. However, each law has a distinct purpose, and the scope of review and standards of review under each law are different.

Under NEPA, the purpose of an EIS is to promote disclosure, analysis, and consideration of the broad range of environmental issues surrounding a proposed major federal action by considering a full range of reasonable alternatives, including a “no-action” alternative. Under the ESA, NOAA Fisheries’ role is to make a regulatory finding and determine whether a proposal complies with specific standards in the ESA. To this end, the ESA has its own substantive requirements, and the documents that reflect the analysis and decisions under the ESA are different from those related to a NEPA analysis.

This draft EIS is being released for public comment as part of the NEPA process. The ten salmon and steelhead hatchery programs will be evaluated through a separate process to ensure ESA compliance.

How do the HGMPs relate to the recovery of listed Puget Sound Chinook salmon and steelhead?

NOAA Fisheries’ responsibility in the Puget Sound is to plan for recovery of listed salmon and steelhead to a point where the species no longer need federal protection under the ESA. NOAA Fisheries has a recovery plans for Puget Sound Chinook salmon and is preparing one for steelhead. The co-managers work with NOAA Fisheries to develop HGMPs that are consistent with recovery goals. Recovery plan documents for Puget Sound salmon and steelhead are available at:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/recovery_planning_and_implementation/puget_sound/puget_sound_salmon_recovery_domain.html

What is NOAA Fisheries' role in the joint state and tribal hatchery plans?

NOAA Fisheries' has a limited role under the ESA 4(d) rules, which is to determine whether or not the HGMPs *as proposed* comply with the ESA and with NEPA. The co-managers have submitted the HGMPs to NOAA Fisheries for evaluation and approval under Limit 6 of the ESA 4(d) rules. NOAA Fisheries is publishing this draft EIS to comply with NEPA.

What is the relationship between the draft environmental impact statement and tribal treaty and trust rights?

United States v. Washington is the 1974 federal court proceeding that enforces and implements treaty fishing rights for salmon and steelhead (and other species) in Puget Sound (and other areas). Fishing rights and access to fishing areas in Puget Sound were reserved in treaties that the federal government signed with the tribes in the 1850s. The Puget Sound Salmon Management Plan is the implementation framework for the allocation, conservation, and equitable sharing principles defined in *United States v. Washington* that governs the joint management and harvest of salmon and steelhead resources between the Puget Sound treaty tribes and State of Washington. The HGMPs submitted jointly by the Puget Sound treaty tribes and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and evaluated in this draft EIS as the proposed action, are components of the Puget Sound Salmon Management Plan.

Where can I access the draft Environmental Impact Statement and other related information on this project?

The draft EIS, HGMPs, and other relevant information on the project can be found on the NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region website at:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/hatcheries/salmon_and_steelhead_hatcheries.html

Can I comment on or suggest alternatives not identified in the draft environmental impact statement?

Yes. You are not constrained to comment solely on the specific alternatives in this draft EIS. We encourage you to comment on alternatives or recommend a preferred alternative that integrates elements of several alternatives presented in this draft.

Specifically, we encourage those reviewing the draft EIS to:

1. Review the draft EIS to understand how it is organized and how the alternatives are framed and analyzed.
2. Carefully consider the information provided in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences and Chapter 5, Cumulative Effects.
3. After considering the effects, comment on how NOAA Fisheries should formulate a preferred alternative for publication in the final environmental impact statement and Record of Decision.

How can I submit comments to NOAA Fisheries on this draft Environmental Impact Statement?

The public may submit comments on the draft EIS any time during the 45-day comment period that ends on December 18, 2017. Electronic or written comments on the draft EIS may be submitted by mail, fax, or e-mail to:

Green River Hatcheries DEIS
National Marine Fisheries Service,
510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 103
Lacey, WA 98503
Fax: (360) 753-9517
Email: GreenHatcheriesEIS.wcr@noaa.gov

When will NOAA Fisheries make a decision on whether or not to approve the hatchery and genetic management plans?

NOAA Fisheries anticipates releasing both a final environmental impact statement and record of decision, as required under NEPA, and determinations on this action under the ESA by the summer of 2018.