

February 8, 2016  
Mike Ramsey  
Recreation and Conservation Office  
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Re: Review Panel Condition on *Ecology of resident Chinook in the San Juan Islands, incorporating a missing component of salmon recovery*, #15-1239, Long Live the Kings (LLTK).

Dear Mike,

The Review Panel in their final project comments (project #15-1239) dated October 28, 2015, placed a Condition as follows:

*Prior to signing the grant agreement, the sponsor will provide the RCO grant manager with a letter from the WRIA 2 Lead Entity and the Puget Sound Partnership that 1) explicitly acknowledges the sponsor's description and schedule for how the results of the study will be integrated with PIAT and incorporated into the local project selection process (as described in Item 10.A.4) and 2) states their commitment to actually carry out the scheduled tasks as described. These letters will be included in the project's PRISM file.*

This letter is to fulfill the requirement of their Condition.

Starting in 2013, our Lead Entity has encouraged LLTK to conduct this resident Chinook assessment. The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was so keen on this information, that they waived their own ban on funding any more assessments. The San Juan Islands, based upon catch records, host more resident Chinook than anywhere else in Puget Sound. This fishery is very important, socially and economically, to San Juan County residents and businesses. Likely the Southern Resident population of killer whales are also consumers as well.

We know very little of the resident Chinook life history in the San Juans. This assessment will identify natal watersheds (or geographic region), resident time in the San Juans, migration to and from the ocean, the importance of the San Juan Islands to growth rates, and their diet. It is the answer to this last question that will inform future projects and may change how we prioritize projects in our lead entity.

The Review Panel asks for a *description and schedule for how the results of the study will be integrated...into the local project selection process*. The schedule outlined by LLTK (p. 10) has field seasons of winter 2016/2017 and 2017/2018. Synthesis and reporting for each field season will be completed by the end of 2017 and 2018 respectively. The Lead Entity Coordinator along with our TAG will be closely monitoring this study and its results. Results will be integrated into our project selection process by our 2019 grant round.

We cannot predict results, but a description of the possible changes include:

1. Finer scale prioritization of forage fish spawning habitat restoration. By 2019, the juvenile Chinook study (#13-1427) will be completed and the final report written. Using these two studies, we may differentially prioritize habitat restoration projects among herring, sand lance, and surf smelt.
2. Similarly, we may amend the Pulling It All Together report to reexamine our highest priority areas for protecting and restoring forage fish habitat.
3. Additional information on other organisms in the Chinook diet, may reprioritize eelgrass protection (herring, crab larvae, and?) and marine riparian restoration (insect production) in our protection strategy.

Beyond the data gaps in the WRIA 2 recovery strategy, the Review Panel also recommended to LLTK to *focus on gaps related to harvest and hatchery management, as described in Objective 4 and Item 10.A of the proposal*. Long Live the Kings is committed to pursue next steps toward recovery actions, including:

- Work with NOAA, WDFW and Puget Sound Tribes to seek funding to implement a Puget Sound-wide assessment of the relative contribution of residents to relevant natural populations identified through this study as a next step to informing Puget Sound-wide recovery/management actions related to residency.
- Work with the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project Coordinating Committee to assess the results of this work in the context of regional hatchery, harvest, habitat and multi-species management and develop a suite of management recommendations. The Coordinating Committee consists of the science directors and natural resource directors from the federal & state agencies and tribes participating in the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project. They also represent the agencies responsible for Puget Sound salmon management and can work with their agencies to implement recommendations of the Committee. As an example, per figure 3 in the proposal, the Coordinating Committee may make a recommendation to federal, state, and tribal harvest managers to adjust harvest exploitation rates on natural-origin Puget Sound Chinook in winter fisheries. Currently, one uniform exploitation rate is applied across all Puget Sound ESU natural population. Tailored exploitation rates could result in improved protections for specific natural populations, and/or reduced concern/burden for protecting natural populations in the winter fishery (e.g., if unmarked fish are Fraser-origin). Alternatively, further assessment of competition between hatchery and wild Chinook during resident phase may be recommended as an outcome of this work. And, if competition exists, recommendations may be made regarding how the production levels of specific hatchery populations should be adjusted.”

We hope that this satisfies the Review Panel’s Condition.

Best Regards,



Byron Rot



Michael Schmidt



Jeanette Dorn

