



Restoration of the White Salmon River *Fish and Dam Removal*

1. How much fish habitat will be restored by dam removal?

The National Marine Fisheries Service reports that dam removal will open up 33 miles of habitat for steelhead and 14 miles for salmon.

2. How much restored habitat will be located in each tributary?

The White Salmon mainstem will contribute approximately thirteen miles above the dam, Buck Creek more than two miles, Mill Creek more than one mile, Rattlesnake Creek more than seven miles, Indian Creek more than one mile, and Spring Creek less than 1/2 mile.

3. Following dam removal, how many fish are expected to spawn in the White Salmon River?

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife estimates that dam removal could reestablish runs of about 700 steelhead adults, 4,000 spring chinook adults, 1,100 fall Chinook adults, and 2,000 coho adults.

4. Why does the White Salmon have high prospects for healthy salmon and steelhead runs?

Only one dam, Bonneville, separates the White Salmon River from the Pacific Ocean, so prospects for recovery of full, productive salmon runs are very high. Each dam in the mainstem Columbia River typically removes 10% of ocean-bound juveniles. (Wenatchee Subbasin Plan, BioAnalysts, April 2004). In addition, the river's gravel beds, cool pools, and large woody debris provide spawning sites and refuge for fish and wildlife.

5. Will reintroducing steelhead threaten existing rainbow and bull trout populations above the dam?

The U.S. Forest Service, which is charged with managing the wild and scenic stretches of the White Salmon River, has concluded that salmon and steelhead reintroduction "will not result in unreasonable diminishment of the resident trout." (Effects of the Proposed Condit Dam Removal on Fish Populations and Habitat in the White Salmon Wild and Scenic River, USDA Forest Service, March 15, 2002) FERC has concluded that resident trout would likely persist and coexist with steelhead in the designated wild and scenic river. (FSFEIS, p. 165). Steelhead and trout coexisted for thousands of years before the dam was built.

6. Will dam breaching cause high flow rates, and if so, how long will these rates last?

Flows during dam breaching will be approximately 10,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) and will last only six to eight hours. For perspective, the expected flow rates will be only one quarter those during the 1996 floods, when 43,000 cfs was observed (USGS).



Courtesy Bill Krebs/Steve Stampfli

7. Will the initial flush of sediment affect salmon populations?

According to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the initial sediment releases will likely be lethal to any salmon in the lower White Salmon River (most likely Lower Columbia River Chinook). The trapping and transport of fish found in the lower river prior to dam removal will preserve the next generation of fish and reduce immediate mortality.

8. How will fall Chinook be protected during dam breaching?

PacifiCorp will lessen the impact by capturing returning fall Chinook salmon before the dam is breached and transporting them to the reach upstream of Condit Dam.

9. Will silt above the dam continue to enter the stream and affect downstream habitat?

Most of the sediment behind the dam will wash downstream during and just after breaching of the dam. Sediment concentrations in the river will gradually decline and cease, and a stable river channel will form.

10. How will the lower White Salmon River change after dam removal?

The October 2006 BiOp issued by NMFS states that “fish likely would have access to the new upstream habitat within a year and that habitat on the lower reach below the dam site would be useable within two years.” Because of gravel loss and low flows caused by the dam, very little natural salmon production currently occurs downstream of Condit Dam. Recent adult salmon radio telemetry studies have confirmed that very few salmon and steelhead reside in the lower White Salmon River. Dam removal will restore natural river processes, such as the transport of spawning gravel and large woody debris, and lower the water temperature downstream from the dam.



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