



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building • 1111 Washington Street SE • Olympia, WA

April 5, 2010

The Honorable Brian Sonntag
State Auditor
Post Office Box 40021
Olympia, Washington 98504-0021

Dear Auditor Sonntag:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the performance audit of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (Department) Delayed-Release Chinook Program. The Department strongly supports the use of performance audits as an important tool to improve state government, which is why we have worked so closely with the Auditor's staff on this and past performance audits. We appreciate the Auditor's staff for their efforts to work diligently through the details in an effort to make each performance audit report helpful to the Department in an effort to improve state government.

We agree with the issue stated in the audit that the Department did not meet the statutory goal to release three million delayed-release Chinook salmon annually. As stated in the report, environmental and wild salmon policies prohibited the achievement of this goal. Of the three recommendations contained in the audit, Recommendation 3 addressed the lack of attaining three million delayed-release Chinook. Our response addresses only Recommendation 3 in that it relates directly to Department actions.

The remaining Recommendations 1 and 2 require action by the legislature. These two recommendations call for the legislature to establish outcome-oriented goals and regular reporting by the Department. We support outcome-oriented goals and regularly reporting on their progress. We will follow the policy direction provided by the legislature with respect to these recommendations.

We appreciate the Auditor's commendation on the Department's use of adaptive management as a best management practice in its salmon recovery efforts, and recognition that the Department has reliable, high quality data.

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Enclosed is the Department's response to the audit. We will track and report our progress on completing the task to the Governor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Anderson", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Philip Anderson
Director

Enclosure

cc: Kimberly Dutton Cregeur
Office of the Governor, Accountability and Performance Office

**Official Response to the Performance Audit of the Department of Fish and Wildlife
Delayed-Release Chinook Salmon
From the Department of Fish and Wildlife
April 5, 2010**

Issue: The Department does not meet the statutory goal to release three million delayed-release Chinook salmon annually. However, the goal does not align with hatchery management best practice, and the low contribution rate and high cost per contributed fish make it an ineffective and inefficient strategy for restoring the Puget Sound recreational fishery.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife concurs with the issue as outlined in the report. The three million delayed-release Chinook goal was not sustainable due to environmental constraints and genetic risks posed to federal ESA listed Puget Sound Chinook.

Recommendation 3: If the Department continues to produce delayed-release Chinook, it should define the term, including which yearlings to count as delayed-release Chinook.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

The Department concurs with the recommendation.

Action Steps and Timeframe:

- The Department will develop and formalize by December 31, 2010 a definition for delayed-release Chinook as it relates to which yearlings to count in the Program.