INDEPENDENT MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE TEAM (IMST)

State of Oregon

John Buckhouse
Wayne Elmore
Stan Gregory
Kathleen Kavanagh
James Lichatowich
Logan Norris, Chair
William Pearcy

May 4, 2001

Kay Brown
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
2501 SW First Avenue
Portland, OR 97207

Dear Kay,

As requested by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST) has reviewed the Conservation Hatchery Improvement Project (CHIP) jointly proposed by the Coastal Salmon Restoration and Production Task Force and ODFW. It is the subject of pending legislation.

The IMST reviewed earlier drafts of the CHIP proposal, corresponding with both ODFW and the Task Force. In general, we find the proposal has been significantly improved during its development. With the concerns expressed below in mind, IMST concludes that in general the proposal can help with salmonid recovery. CHIP will provide needed information regarding the use of hatcheries and in the conservation and recovery of wild salmonids. We encourage its funding and implementation.

We see that at this stage the specific CHIP proposals are conceptual and are not detailed plans ready for immediate implementation. If funding is secured each project should undergo more thorough development of the experimental design and methodology followed by a peer review to ensure success.

We have several comments on specific proposals. First, we note the limited number of replications planned for the Lower Columbia River Supplementation proposal. This study has some similarities with the important study of Nickelson et al. (1986). In that study 15 stocked and unstocked streams were compared, in contrast with only three seeded and one unseeded control streams potentially used in the CHIP proposal. Discussions with Nickelson suggest that fewer replicates than were used in his study may be appropriate in this case, but we remain concerned about this point, and feel study design be carefully reviewed.

Second, the objective of the Alsea winter steelhead project is to develop a hatchery broodstock to provide for a recreational fishery. It is not designed as a supplementation project to assess or enhance natural spawning of wild steelhead.

Third, we also feel that ODFW should assess the rearing capacity of all the habitats considered for supplementation. Without an assessment of the limiting habitat factors for salmon and steelhead populations in these project areas we feel that projects will not be able to accurately evaluate their success. Further discussion on the need for habitat assessment can be found in the IMST supplementation workshop report (IMST 2000).

Scientifically rigorous CHIP projects are essential if they are to provide useful information for salmonid recovery. We conclude that, scientifically, the Oregon Plan will benefit if the CHIP projects are planned and conducted with the scientific rigor required to meet their stated objectives. This may require reducing the total number of projects undertaken to fit within funding available.

Based on our collective knowledge and on reports completed by the IMST, we are providing the following prioritization of CHIP projects:

1. Nonpareil Dam Adult Trap and Coho Genetic Pedigree.
2. Lower Columbia Coho Supplementation.
3. Gnat Creek Hatchery Evaluation Center.
4. Alsea Winter Steelhead Wild Broodstock Development.

Please let me know if any clarification of this would be helpful.

Sincerely Yours,

Logan A. Norris
Chair, Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team

cc: Senator Joan Dukes
ODFW Commission
IMST

Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team. 2000. Conservation Hatcheries and Supplementation Strategies for Recovery of Wild Stocks of Salmonids: Report of a Workshop. Technical Report 2000-1 to the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Salem, Oregon.

Nickelson, T.E., M.F. Solazzi, and S.L. Johnson. 1986. Use of hatchery coho, salmon (Oncorhynchus kisutch) presmolts to rebuild wild populations in Oregon coastal streams. Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences,43:2443-2449,6