Regional Patterns in Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Juvenile Survival Relative to Smolt-to-Adult Return Rates

Steve Haeseker
USFWS Columbia River Fisheries Program Office

Jerry McCann, Brandon Chockley, Dave Benner
Fish Passage Center
Key Questions:

What are the spatial and temporal patterns in survival?

What factors are associated with the patterns in survival?

Can management efforts help achieve regional survival goals?

NPCC Goal: Smolt-to-Adult survival rates averaging 4%
Minimize Smolt-to-Adult survival rates < 1%
What are the spatial and temporal patterns in survival?

**Species?**

Wild spring/summer (yearling) Chinook salmon
Wild steelhead

**Timeframe?**

Juvenile outmigration years 2000-2012

**Tools?**

Mark-recapture methods using PIT tags
330K steelhead, 1.1 million Chinook salmon tags
Study Area

1-3 years
Freshwater survival

**steelhead**

Mean: 85% >> 57% > 48%

**Chinook salmon**

Mean: 81% >> 60% > 54%
Fish Travel Time

**steelhead**

Mean: 1.8 << 6.6 << 12.5

**Chinook salmon**

Mean: 4.1 << 9.9 << 19.1
Ocean survival

steelhead

Mean: 10.2% > 7.0% >> 3.8%

Chinook salmon

Mean: 6.0% ≈ 5.4% >> 2.5%
Smolt-to-Adult survival

Steelhead
Mean: 4.4% ≈ 3.7% >> 1.4%

Chinook salmon
Mean: 5.6% ≈ 5.6% >> 2.1%
Instantaneous mortality rates

Steelhead Chinook salmon

8% mortality/day

4% mortality/day

Freshwater Survival

Fish Travel Time
Correlations between freshwater and ocean survival

Log$_e$(Freshwater survival)

Log$_e$(Ocean survival)

steelhead

Chinook salmon
Variable environmental conditions
Variable environmental conditions

**Freshwater**

**Water Transit Time**

**Powerhouse Passages**
Variable environmental conditions

Marine

Winter Icthyoplankton

Pacific Decadal Oscillation
Variable environmental conditions

**Freshwater**
- Water Transit Time
- Powerhouse Passages

**Marine**
- Winter Icthyoplankton
- Pacific Decadal Oscillation
Variable environmental conditions

\[ \log_e \left( \frac{\text{Smolt-to-Adult}}{\text{survival}} \right) \]

Powerhouses

Water Transit Time

Winter Ichthyoplankton

Steelhead

Chinook salmon
What factors are associated with the patterns in survival?

Multiple regression with multi-model inference

Migration year as random effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Freshwater survival</th>
<th>Ocean survival</th>
<th>Smolt-to-Adult survival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water Transit Time</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerhouse passages</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average dissolved gas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Ichthyoplankton</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Decadal Oscillation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fitted freshwater survival

steelhead  $R^2 = 0.85$

Chinook salmon  $R^2 = 0.60$
Fitted ocean survival

Steelhead \( R^2 = 0.70 \)

Chinook salmon \( R^2 = 0.87 \)
Fitted Smolt-to-Adult survival

steelhead  \( R^2 = 0.79 \)

Chinook salmon  \( R^2 = 0.90 \)
Relative Variable Importance

Steelhead Chinook salmon

Freshwater survival

Ocean survival

Smolt-to-Adult survival

Smolt-to-Adult survival

Smolt-to-Adult survival
Can management efforts help achieve regional survival goals?

Use model-averaged coefficients to forecast Smolt-to-Adult survival rates

Considered two management scenarios:
  - Current Biological Opinion spill levels
  - Spill to 125% dissolved gas limits

Account for variable freshwater and ocean conditions:
  - High, average, low flow years
  - Winter Ichthyoplankton, Pacific Decadal Oscillation
Predicted Smolt-to-Adult survival rates: Chinook salmon

Prob. (< 1% SAR): 38% 5%
Predicted Smolt-to-Adult survival rates: steelhead

Prob. (< 1% SAR): 26% 0%
Conclusions

Models captured high degree of spatial and temporal patterns in variation

**Freshwater:** Powerhouses + Water Transit Time

**Ocean:** Powerhouses + Water Transit Time + Ichthyoplankton + PDO

**Smolt-to-Adult:** Powerhouses + Water Transit Time + Ichthyoplankton + PDO

**Snake:** 230% - 250% improvement in Smolt-to-Adult survival with increased spill

**Yakima:** 50% - 60% improvement

**John Day:** 30% - 50% improvement

**Adaptive Management Experiment:**
Ongoing tagging efforts provides framework for monitoring