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October 6, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Council Members**

FROM: **Windy Schoby, Fish and Wildlife Policy Analyst - Idaho**

SUBJECT: **Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Management: Program Overview**

BACKGROUND:

Presenters: Jay Hesse, Director of Biological Services, Nez Perce Tribe

Summary: The Nez Perce Tribe takes an integrated, life-cycle approach to protecting and restoring salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey, sturgeon, and other culturally important species. The presentation will highlight current Tribal fisheries and restoration efforts, concerns regarding the status and future of Snake River fish populations, and opportunities to strengthen regional collaboration. The discussion will also identify near-term conservation actions and investments that can complement ongoing restoration efforts and advance shared fish and wildlife objectives.

Relevance: The Nez Perce Tribe has a long-standing partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Council in implementing the Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program, with BPA-supported fisheries work dating to 1983 and development of the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery program. Over more than four decades, the Tribe's BPA-funded portfolio has expanded to include artificial production, research and monitoring, fish population assessments, and extensive habitat restoration throughout the Snake River Basin.

This presentation highlights a range of efforts supported through these contracts, as well as broader Tribal initiatives that contribute to a whole-of-government approach to salmon and steelhead restoration. It also provides an opportunity to discuss the Tribe's interest in working collaboratively with the Council to identify opportunities for increased investment in near-term conservation actions that can provide meaningful benefits for fish while supporting longer-term restoration and recovery objectives.

Background: Jay Hesse has worked for the tribe for over 30 years. He currently serves as the Director for Biological Services.

The Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Management works across a three-state area (north-central Idaho, northeastern Oregon, and southeastern Washington) corresponding to the tribe's ancestral homeland and is one of the largest tribal fisheries programs in the United States. The Department is a key regional fisheries co-manager and has played a significant role in restoring and managing salmon, steelhead, and other native fish populations throughout the Columbia River Basin.

DFRM's mission is to protect and restore aquatic resources and habitats consistent with the Nimiipúu way of life and the fishing and resource rights reserved by the Tribe under the Treaty of 1855. Its vision is to achieve healthy, sustainable, and harvestable populations of anadromous and resident fish throughout Nez Perce Usual and Accustomed areas.

The Department integrates fisheries restoration, habitat protection, supplementation, harvest management, research, monitoring, and adaptive management. Its approach emphasizes watershed-scale ("ridge-top to ridge-top") and full life-cycle ("gravel-to-gravel") management, recognizing that successful fish restoration requires addressing conditions across habitats and life stages. These efforts are grounded in the cultural importance of fish to the Nimiipúu and the goal of sustaining meaningful treaty harvest opportunities, cultural traditions, and fisheries resources for present and future generations.

More info:

Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Homepage

Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Management Plan

And

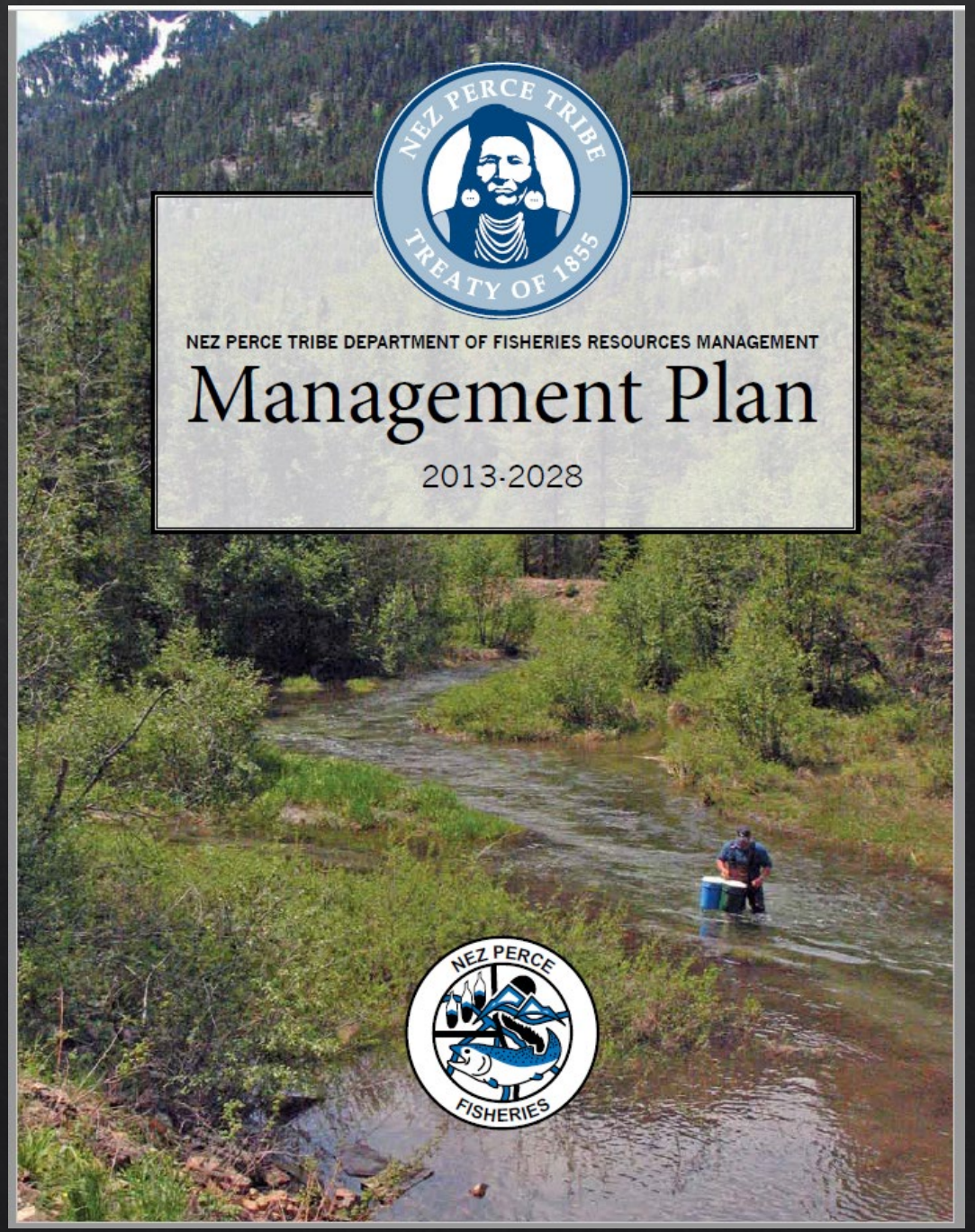




DFRM Management Plan

https://nezperce.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/DFRM-Management-Plan-2013-2028.pdf

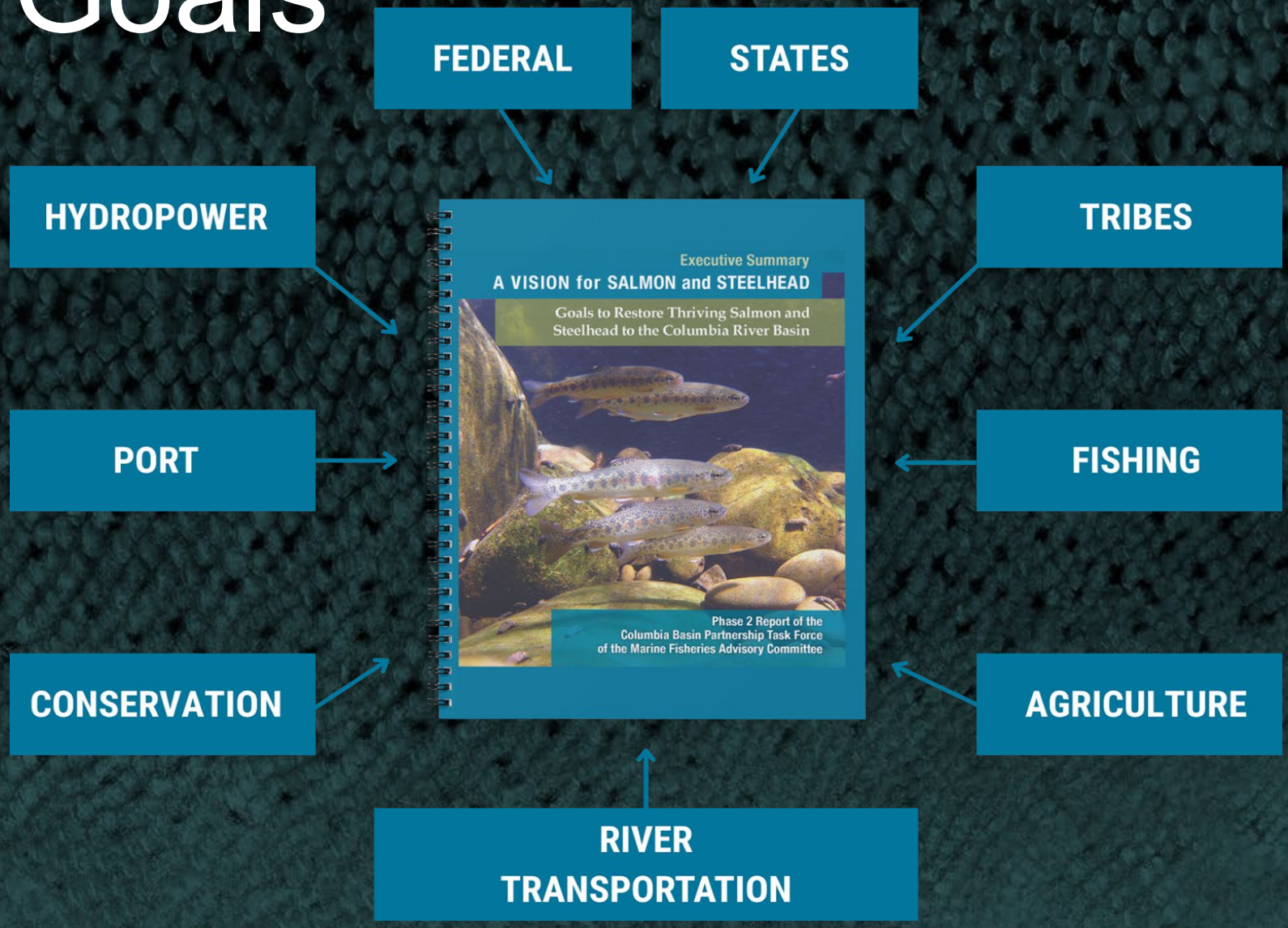
- Provides information about Tribe
- Importance of fish (all species, stocks)
- Management Framework
  - Abundance goals
  - Watershed goals (ridge top to ridge top)
  - Harvest goals and management
- Management Process
  - How we coordinate, organize and prioritize resources and individual projects to work towards management objectives



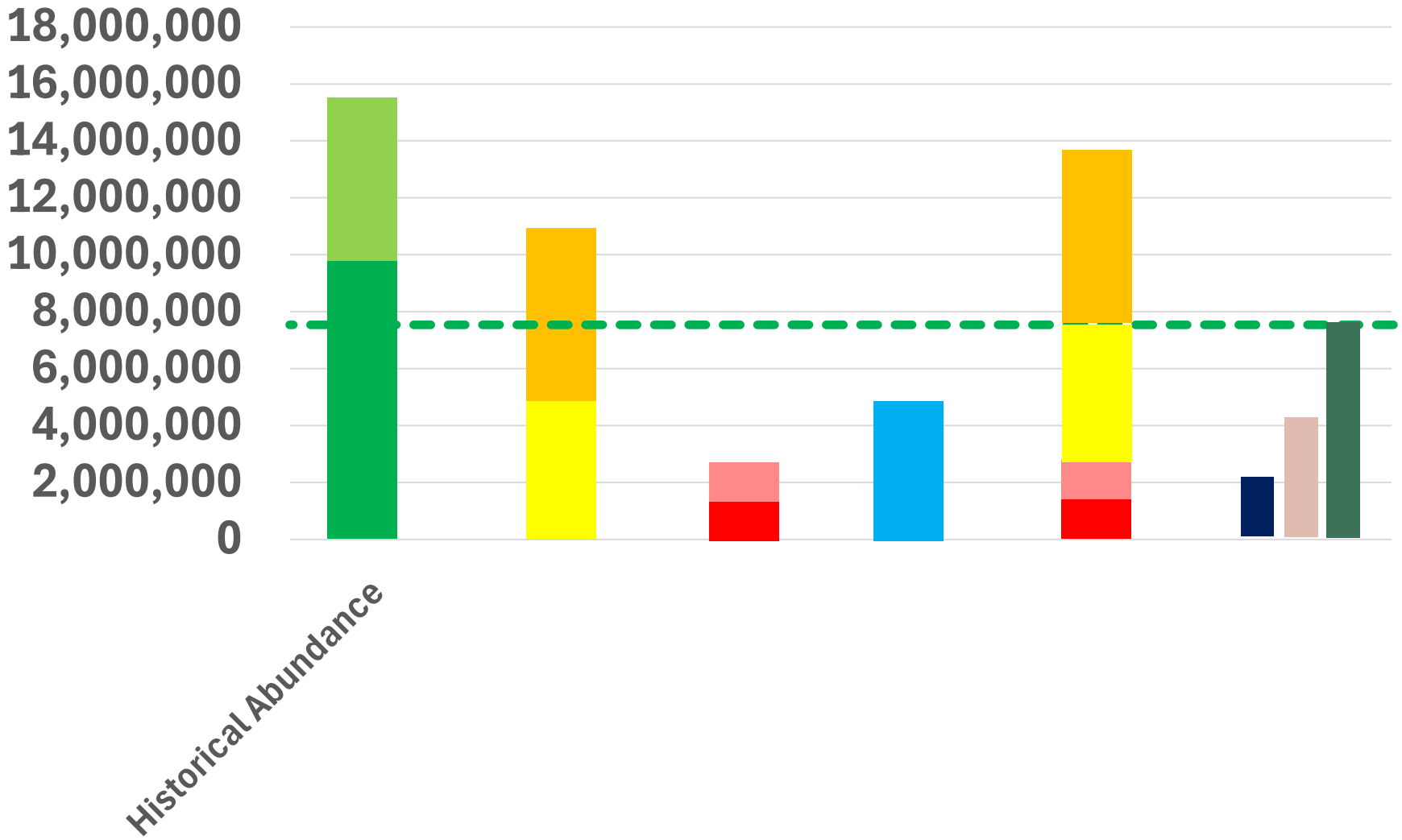
Healthy and Harvestable Adequacy Goals

2018 - 2020:

Columbia Basin Partnership (CBP) Task Force convened to determine common goals for recovery



Compatibility of FWP and CBP Abundance Goals
Columbia River Mouth

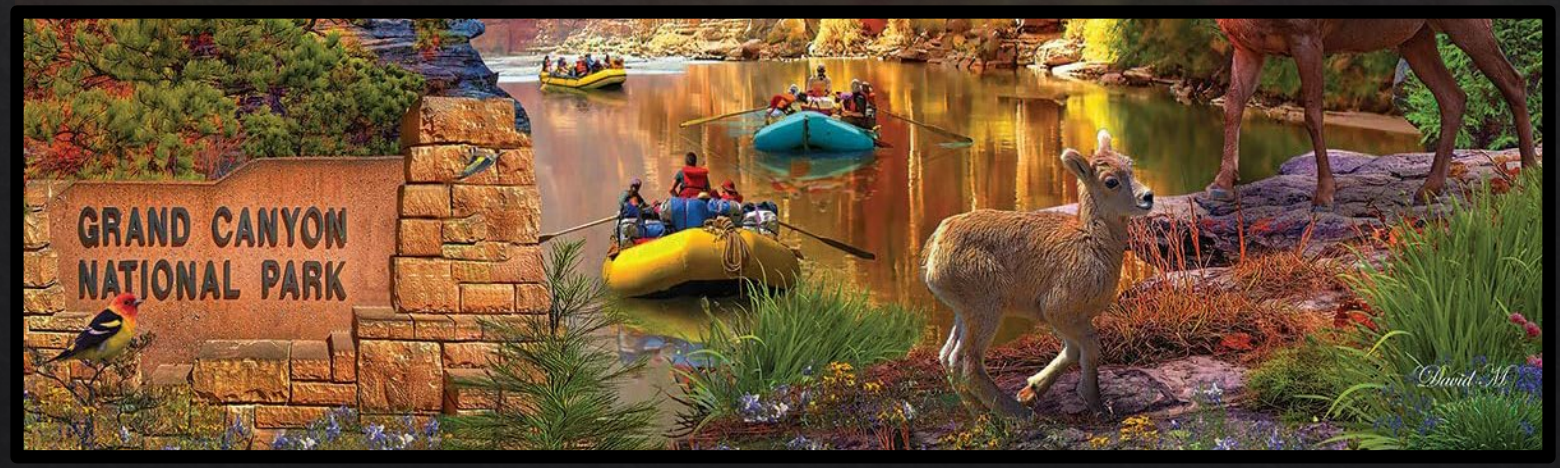


Historical Snake Basin Anadromous Fish Abundance



2 million fish returning each year = 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle

Contemporary Vision for Healthy and Harvestable Snake Basin Anadromous Fish Abundance



748,500 fish returning each year = 374-piece jigsaw puzzle

Current (2025)
Snake Basin Anadromous Fish Abundance

206,000 fish = 103 jigsaw puzzle pieces



Current (2025)
Snake Basin Anadromous Fish Abundance

206,000 fish = 103 jigsaw puzzle pieces

Stock	Wild	Hatchery	Total
Sp/Su Chinook	10,000	52,000	62,000
Fall Chinook	4,500	22,500	28,000
Steelhead	20,000	86,000	106,000
Sockeye	0	900	900
Coho	0	9,000	9,000



Current (2025) Relative to Healthy and Harvestable (Snake River Basin)

545,000 fish shortfall

Stock	Wild	Hatchery	Total
Sp/Su Chinook	225,000	38,000	263,000
Fall Chinook	13,800	2,300	16,100
Steelhead	120,300	47,300	167,300
Sockeye	54,500	0	54,500
Coho	44,100	0	44,100



Actions Beyond FWP

Nez Perce Tribe Action Examples

In-stream Flow Maintenance

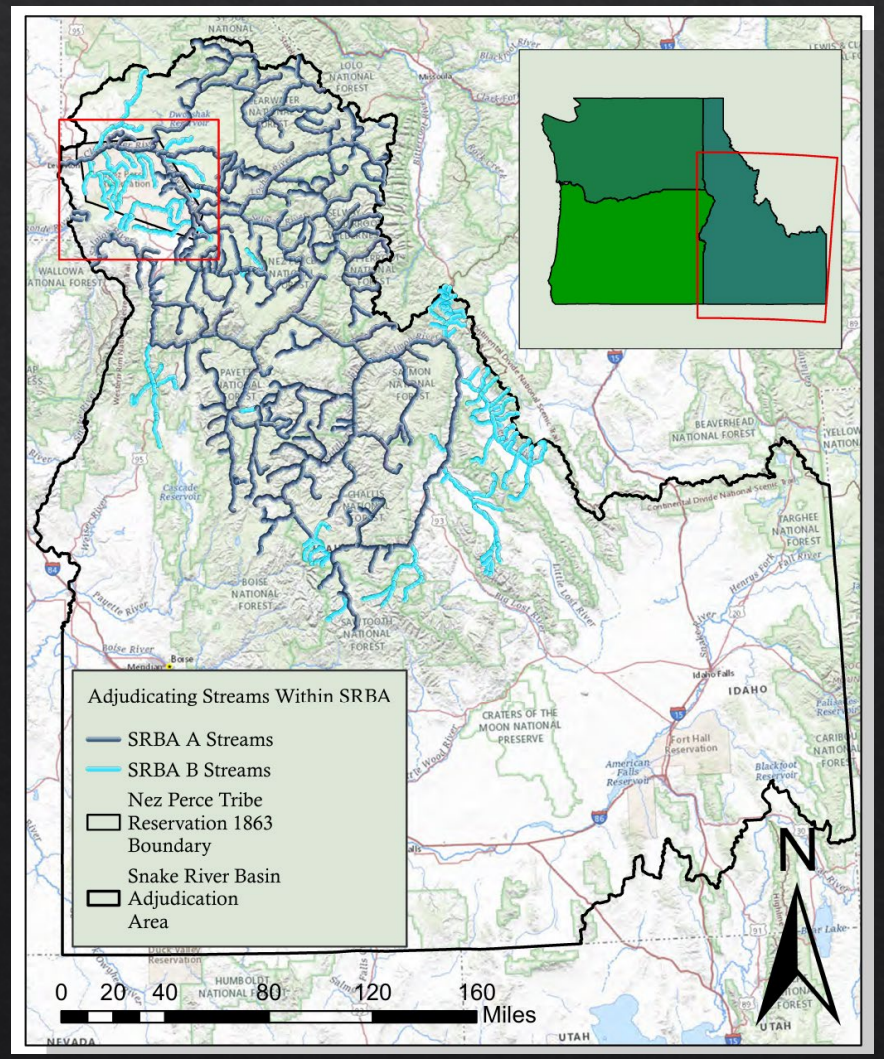
Water Quality Protection

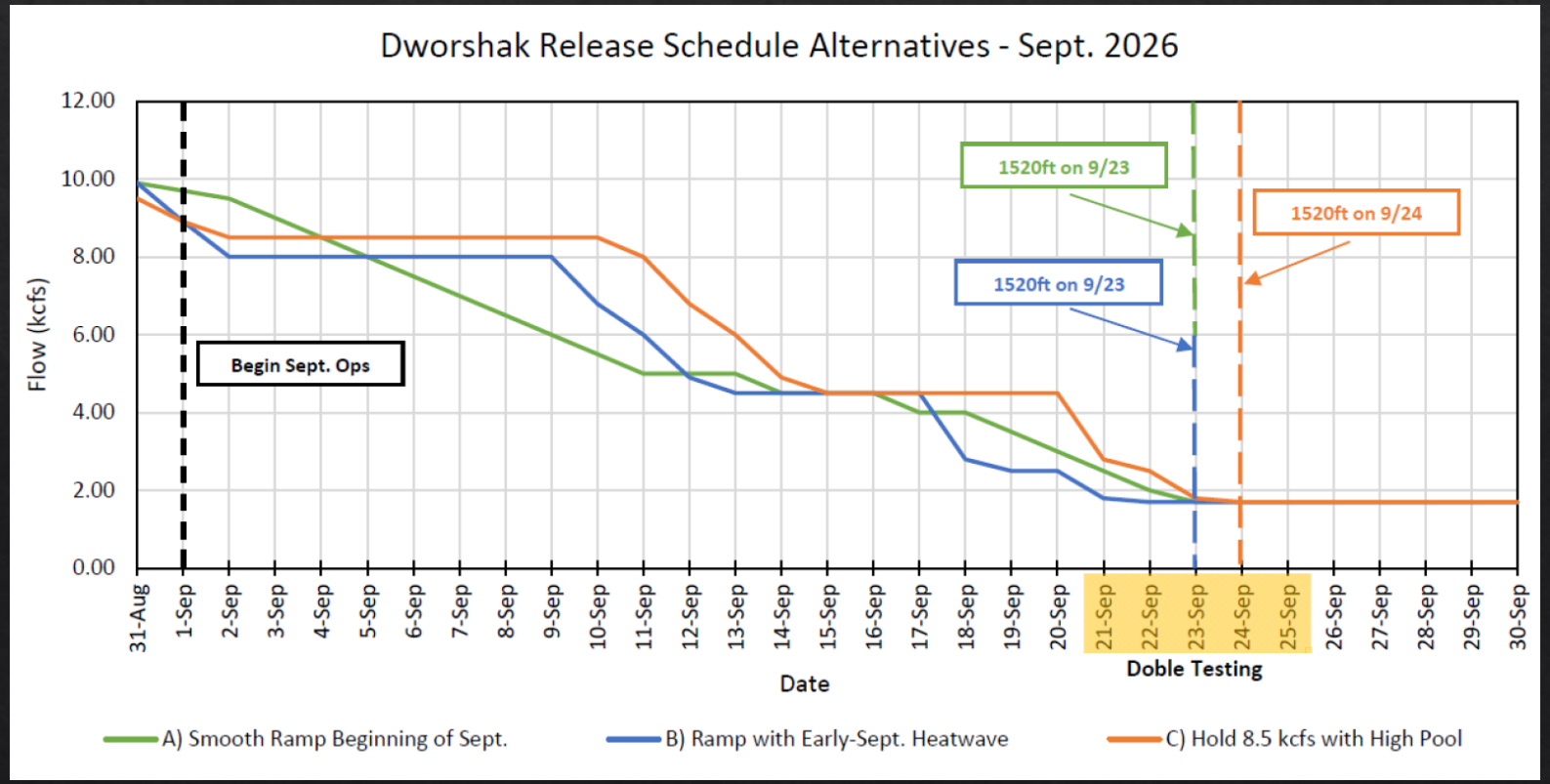
Fall Chinook Supplementation

Coho Reintroduction

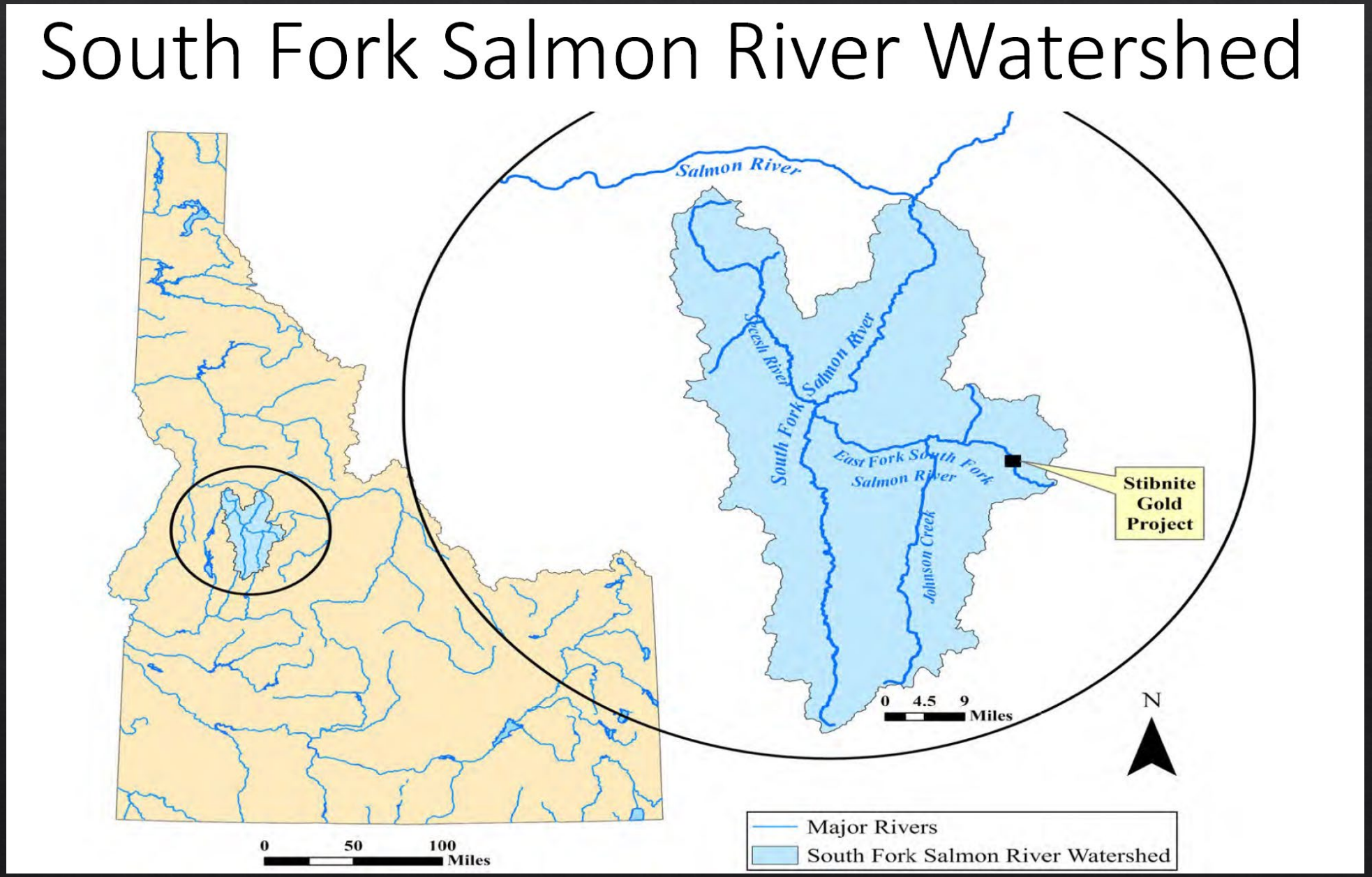
Sockeye Reintroduction and Conservation

In-stream Flow Maintenance
Snake River Basin Adjudication Agreement





Water Quality Protection



Water Quality Protection



East Fork South Fork Salmon River Watershed

- Serious impacts from past mining and road building have not been fully addressed
- New Stibnite mine and road development will make things significantly worse and be long-lasting

Water Quality Protection

Other proposed mines near Stibnite

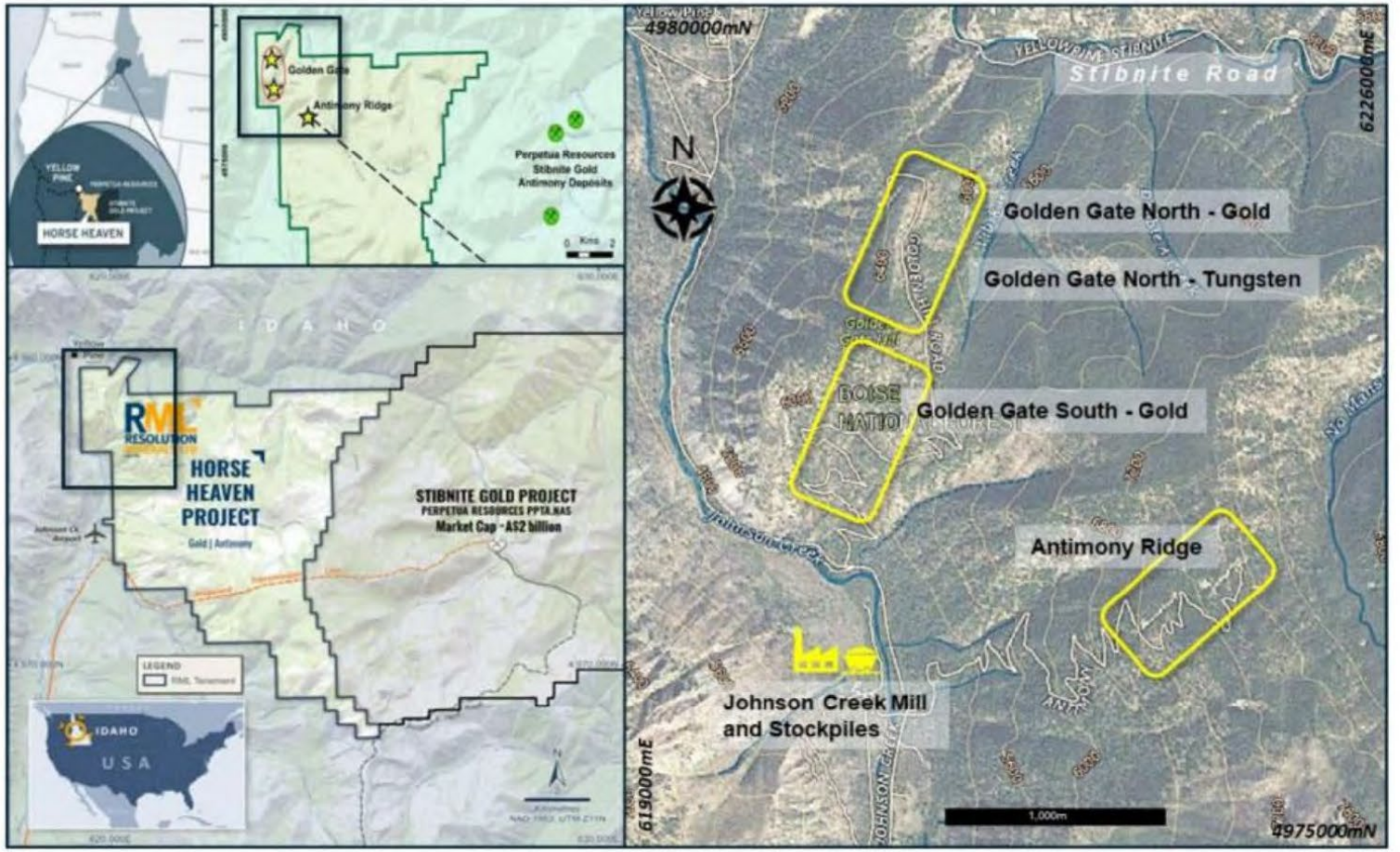
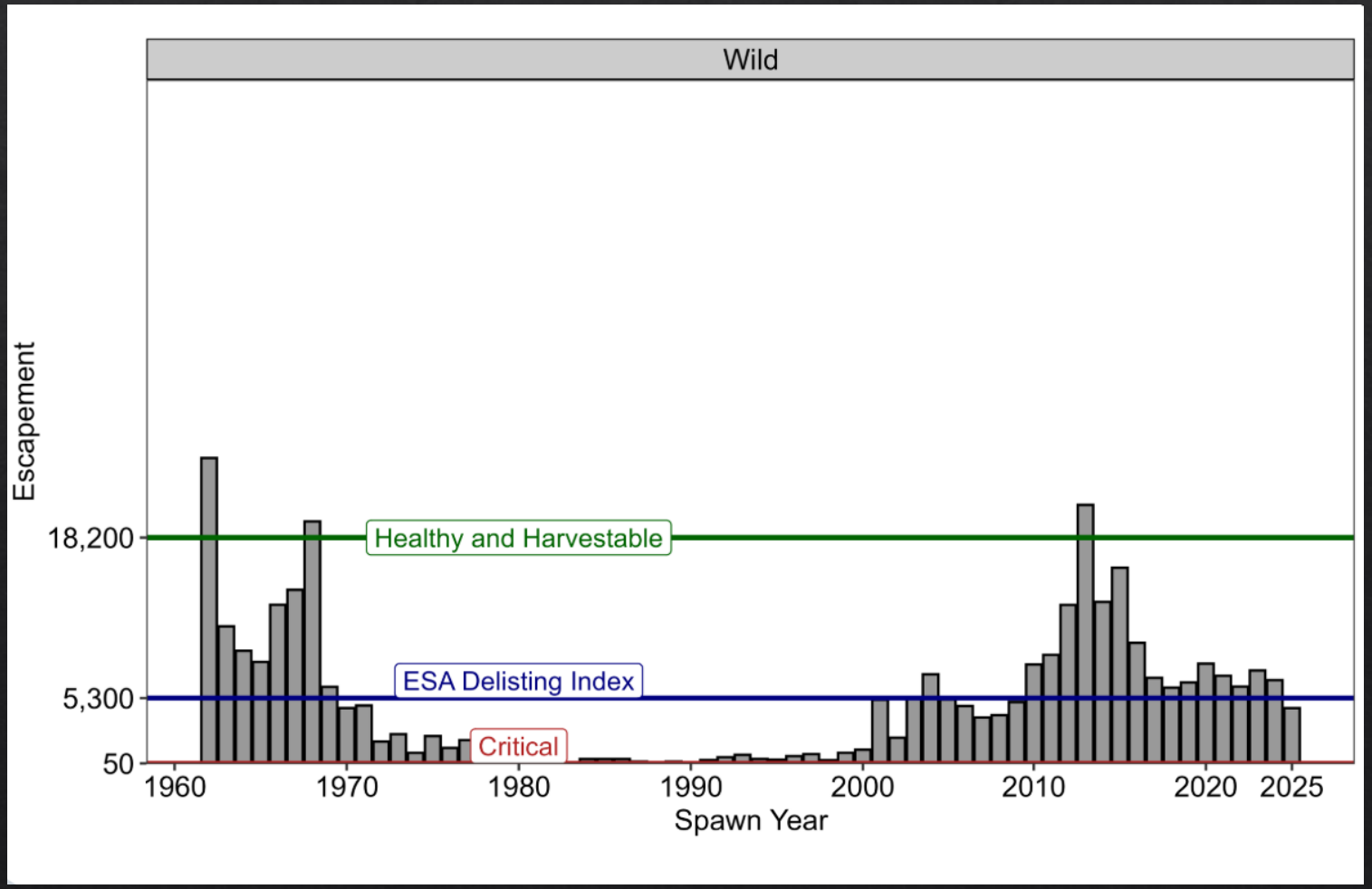
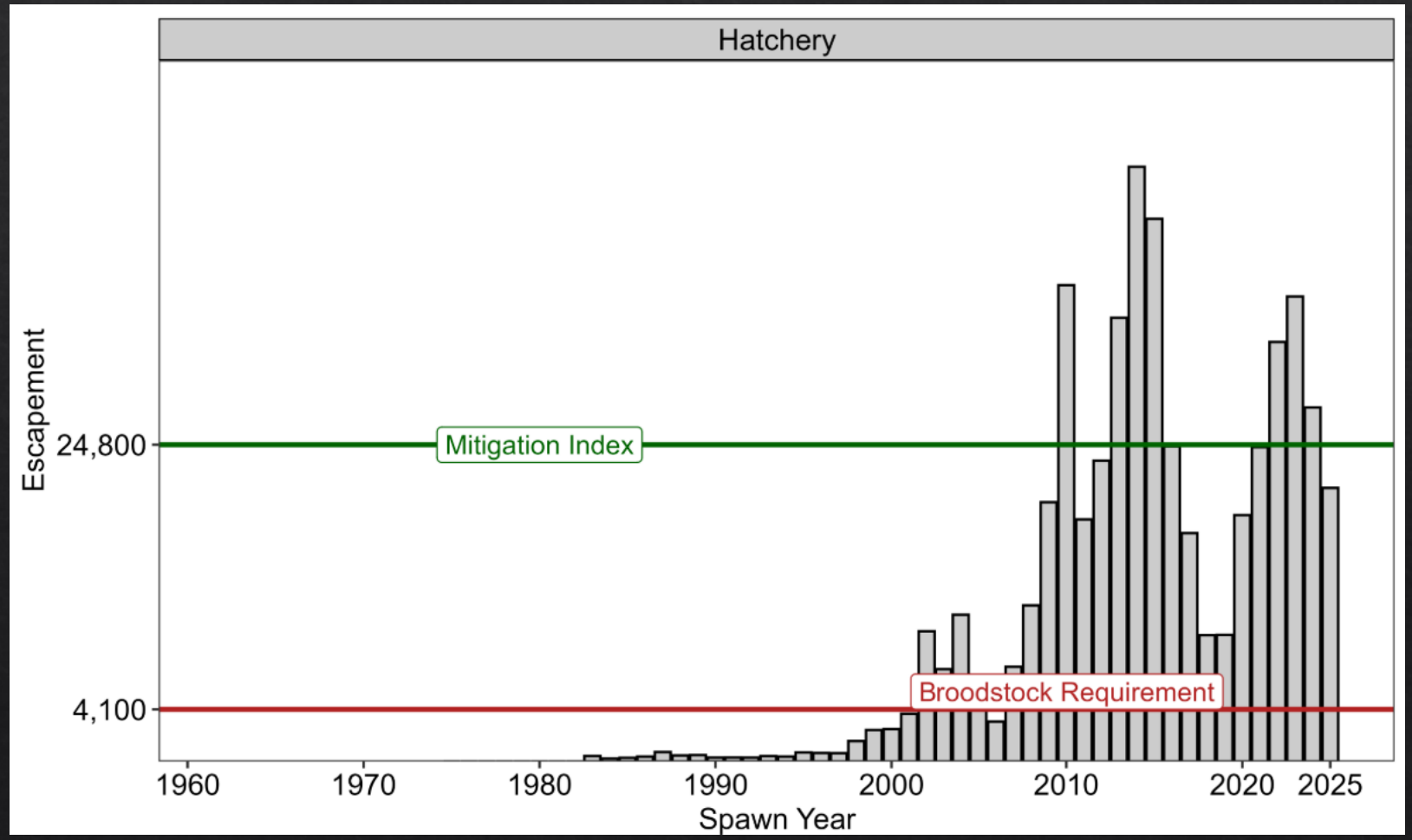


***Figure 2**: Resolution's Horse Heaven Antimony-Tungsten-Gold-Silver Project – Relationship of Antimony Ridge (Sb) with Golden Gate (Au) and Golden Gate Tungsten (W).*

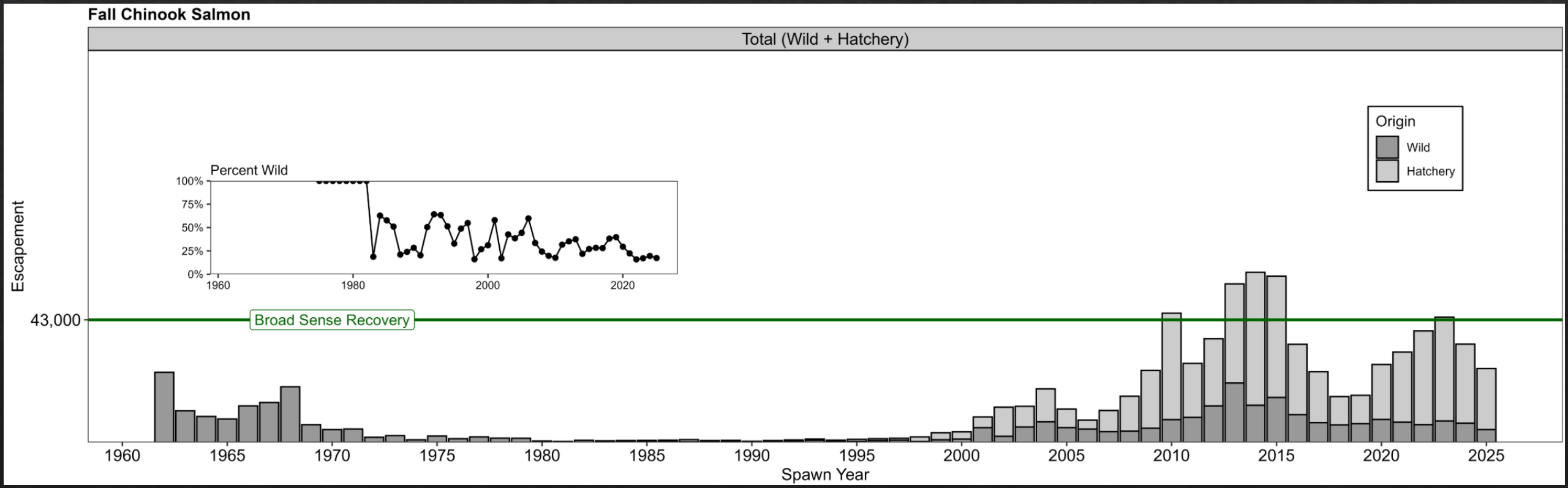
Snake River Fall Chinook Supplementation
Wild



Snake River Fall Chinook Supplementation Hatchery



Snake River Fall Chinook Supplementation Wild and Hatchery



Snake Basin Coho Reintroduction
Lower Granite Abundance



Outdoors

A walleye whopper
Montana boy bests his international record
– PAGE 3E

INSIDE:
Steelhead passage: 6E
Fish counts: 6E
Brag Boards: 6E

E

THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2014

BACK FROM THE BRINK

Coho Clearwater Revival

Resurgence of a fish species once considered extinct will require a new approach to fall angling

By ERIC BARKER / OF THE TRIBUNE

Fall fishing in Idaho is getting far more interesting.

Starting today, anglers on the Clearwater River will be able to fish for and keep coho salmon for the first time in many decades. In fact, the last time there were abundant numbers of coho in the river likely predates the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and regulated fishing seasons.

Now anglers, depending on where they wet a line, can target three runs of anadromous fish. That wasn't the case just a few years ago.

"In 2008, we only fished for steelhead in the fall and now we fish for steelhead, fall chinook and coho," said Joe DuPont, regional fisheries manager for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game at Lewiston. "It's become quite an exciting time for people who like to fish."

Much of that excitement can be attributed to the Nez Perce Tribe. Coho were declared extinct from the Snake River basin in the 1980s and the tribe has worked for the past 20 years to restore the species. The tribe also led efforts to revive the Snake River fall chinook run in Idaho. Both are giving anglers new opportunities but new challenges as well.

Just as they had to learn different tactics to target fall chinook a few years ago, coho fishing will require some new approaches.

"That will be kind of cool. My customers will be doing back flips if they can catch those guys too."
OUTFITTER JEFF JARRETT

But steelhead outfitter Jeff Jarrett of Jarrett's Guide Service said those who want a fair chance of landing a silver won't have to make any drastic changes.

"Just about any technique you use for steelhead will catch them," he said.

Coho can be found in the same types of places that steelhead like to hold. But Jarrett said anglers looking to target coho, might want to step away from their normal haunts.

"Head to the riffles where it's shallow and fast," he said.

Like many anglers in Idaho, Jarrett was surprised Wednesday when he learned a coho fishing season had been approved on the Clearwater and its north and middle forks.

"That will be kind of cool," he said. "My customers will be doing back flips if they can catch those guys too."

Randy Krull, owner of Camp, Cabin and Home, a Lew-

> See COHO, page 6E

Tribune/Eric Barker

Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries employees Carter Lopez (right) and Joe Samuels process coho salmon at Dworshak National Fish Hatchery. The tribe has worked to restore coho, once extinct in the Snake River basin, to the Clearwater River.

Some tips to help you identify a coho on your line

Tribune/Eric Barker

(1) These three species of fish (from top, a coho, a steelhead and a fall chinook) can appear similar to anglers not accustomed to seeing them. (2) Coho salmon have white gum lines but dark tongues. (3) Coho also have distinctive, white nostril flares and black gums. (4) Coho have hardly any spots on their tails. The spots they do have are found on the upper portion.

By ERIC BARKER
OF THE TRIBUNE

New coho anglers will have to do more than just learn where to find and how to catch the fish. They will also be required to become skilled at fish identification.

None of the more than 15,000 coho bound for the Clearwater River had their adipose fins removed as juveniles. Anglers can keep coho, despite the fact that they haven't been marked as hatchery fish. But they must take care that they aren't mistakenly harvesting a wild steelhead or fall chinook.

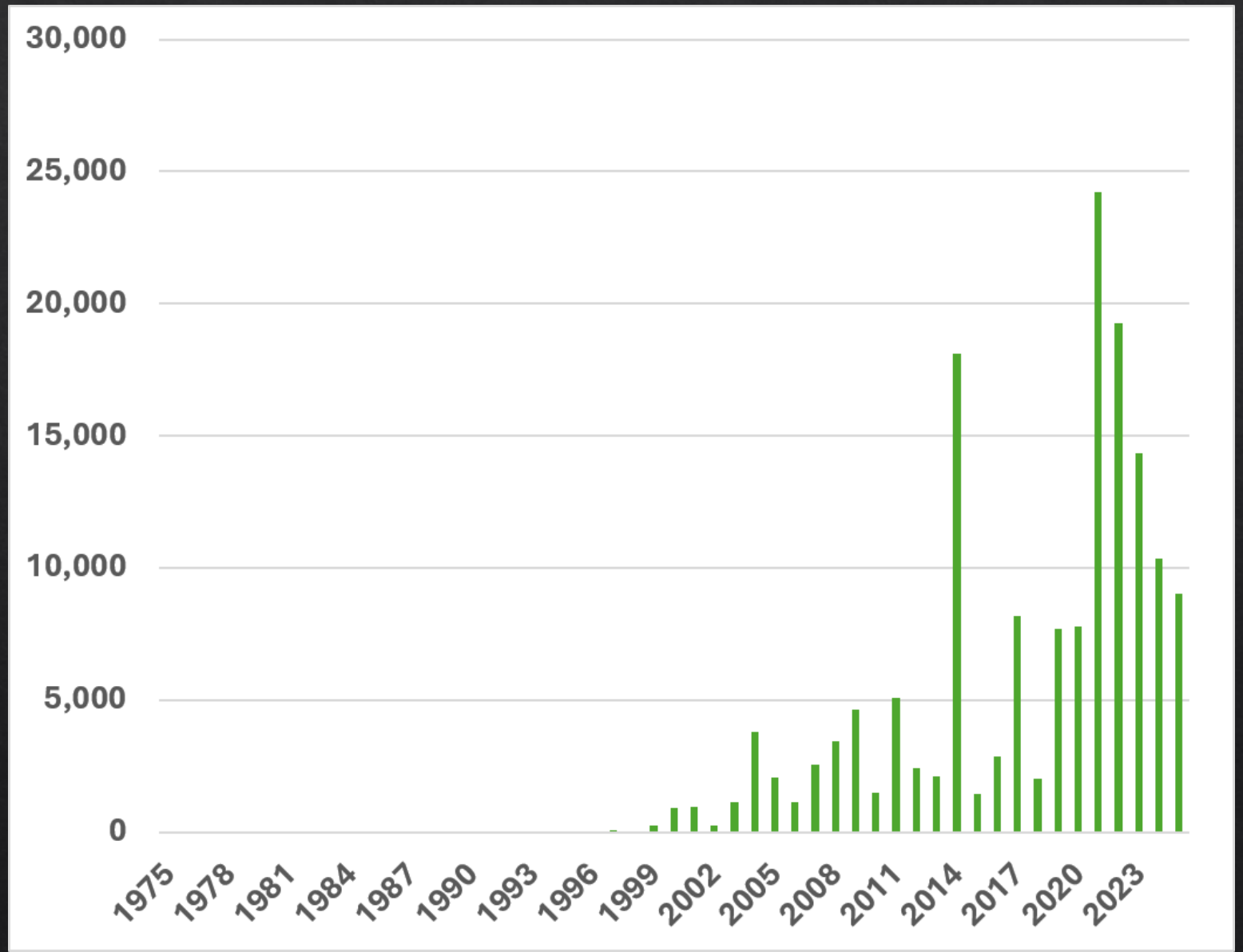
"We have a great opportunity here in the Clearwater (region) because there are so many different species to fish for," said Joe DuPont, regional fisheries manager for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game at Lewiston. "When you have lots of opportunity you also have more restrictions in order to take advantage of those opportunities. People need to be educated on what our fish look like. In Oregon and Washington, anglers are used to this. I'm confident our anglers can do it, they just have to be aware of what to look for."

- Coho have dark tongues with white gum lines around the base of their teeth. Their tails are nearly devoid of spots, with only a few on the upper half of the tail. There is a 120-degree angle between the anal fin and tail. They also have white nostrils.
- Steelhead have white mouths, spots all over the tail and there is a 90-degree angle between the anal fin and tail.
- Fall chinook have black gum lines, large spots on their back and tail and there is a 120-degree angle between the anal fin tail.

The department included coho identification tips in its coho fishing pamphlet and is posting identification pictures at Clearwater River boat ramps.

Barker may be contacted at ebarker@lmtribune.com or at (208) 848-2275. Follow him on Twitter @eabarker.

Snake Basin Coho Reintroduction
Lower Granite Abundance



Coho Reintroduction

Lessons from Interior Columbia River Coho Restoration Story



- Hatcheries are an effective tool in reintroducing and restoring an extirpated species
  - Local broodstocks
  - Acclimation
- All Species & All Stocks management is important
- *US vs. Oregon* was where it started
  - The purpose of the Management Agreement is to provide a framework within which the Parties may exercise their sovereign powers in a coordinated and systematic manner to protect, rebuild, and enhance upper Columbia River fish runs while providing harvests for both treaty Indian and non-treaty fisheries.
- Treaty Tribes did the heavy lifting

Sockeye Reintroduction and Conservation

Restoring Tribal Sockeye Fisheries

More Fish. More Places. More Fisheries.



Wallowa Lake, Oregon – Homeland of the NiMiiPuu people



Wallowa Pilot Program sockeye adults at Bonneville Hatchery, July 2026

Wallowa Pilot Program – eggs provided from captive broodstock program - releases at Bonneville Hatchery lower Columbia River

50,000 Sockeye Smolts (released at Bonneville Hatchery)

Adult return – eventual destination:
50% Wallowa Lake, Oregon 50% Redfish Lake, Idaho

798

Pilot program sockeye trapped at Bonneville Hatchery 2026

0 adults transported to Wallowa Valley	**798** adults transported to Redfish and Petit Lakes for natural spawning

Urgent and Adequate Near-Term Conservation Actions

- Kelt reconditioning
- Conservation hatchery actions
- Predator (sea lions, fish and birds) management
- Nutrient enhancement
- Tribal harvest
- Salmon Rebuilding Energy Load

The “And”.....

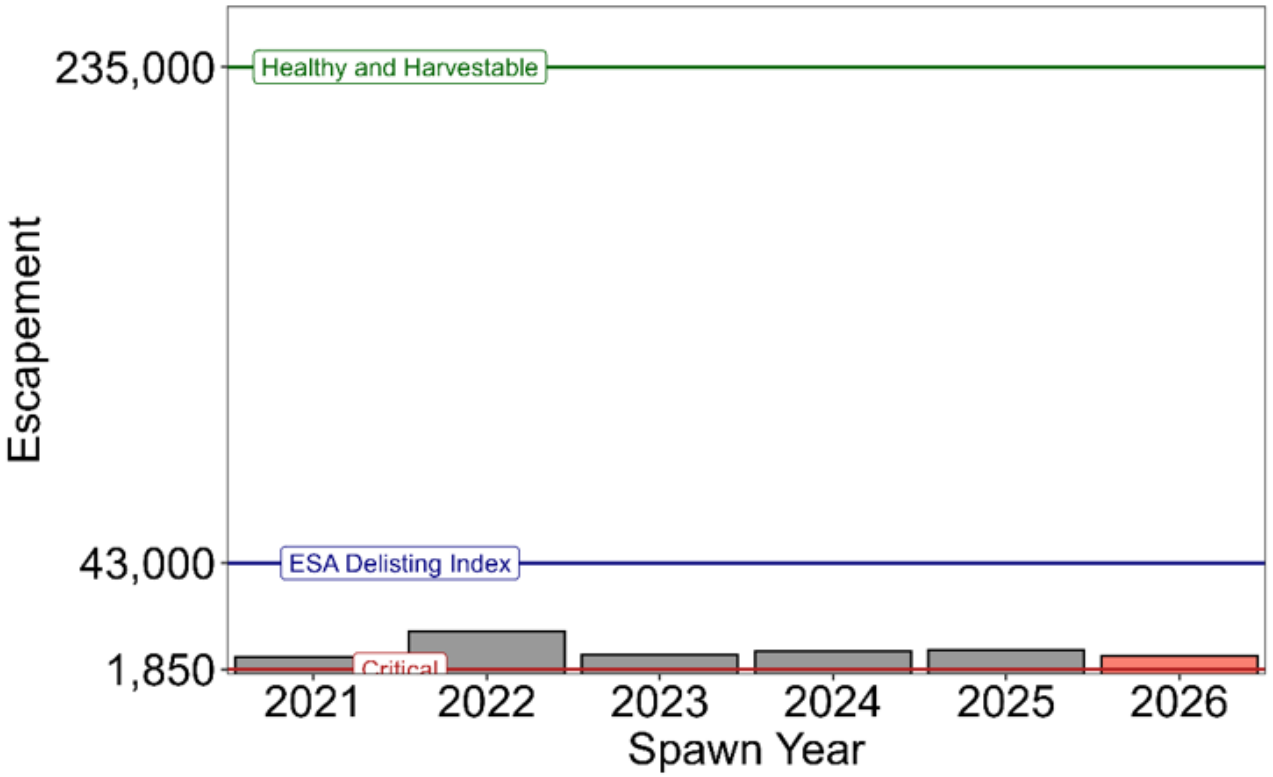


Photos by Mary Edwards
(www.maryedwardsphotography.com)

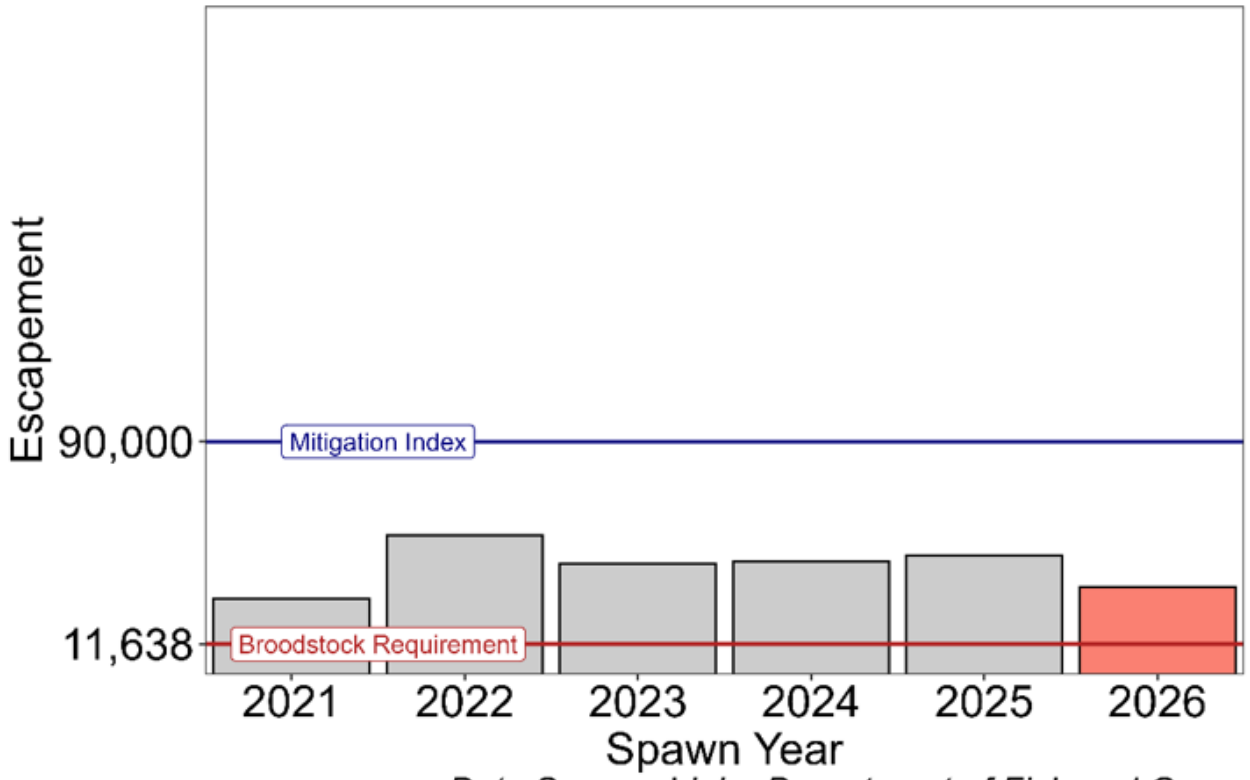
Adult Escapement at Lower Granite Dam

Spring-summer Chinook

Natural-origin



Hatchery-origin

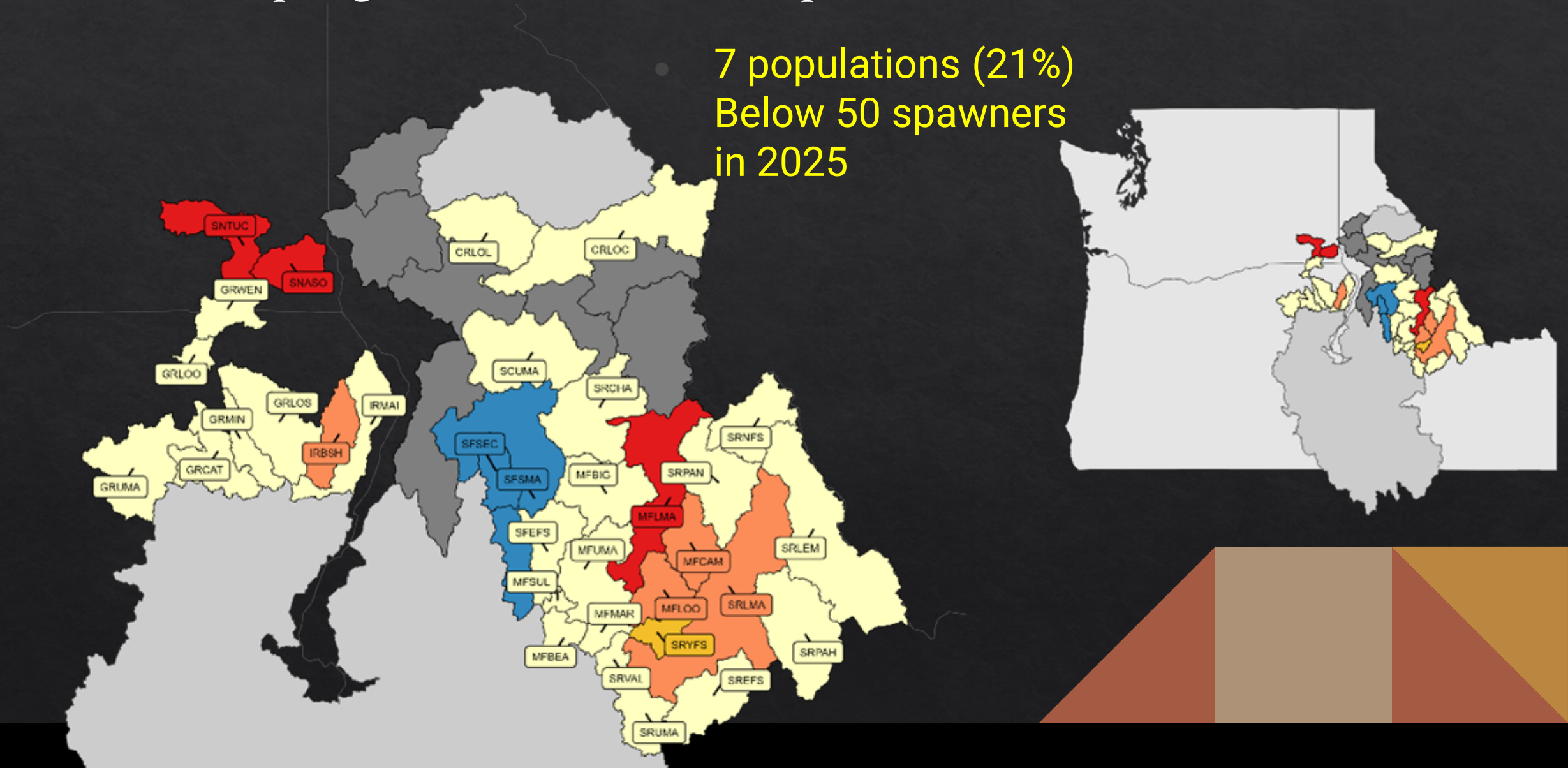


Data Source: Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Quasi-Extinction Threshold (QET)

Spring/summer Chinook Populations - Snake Basin

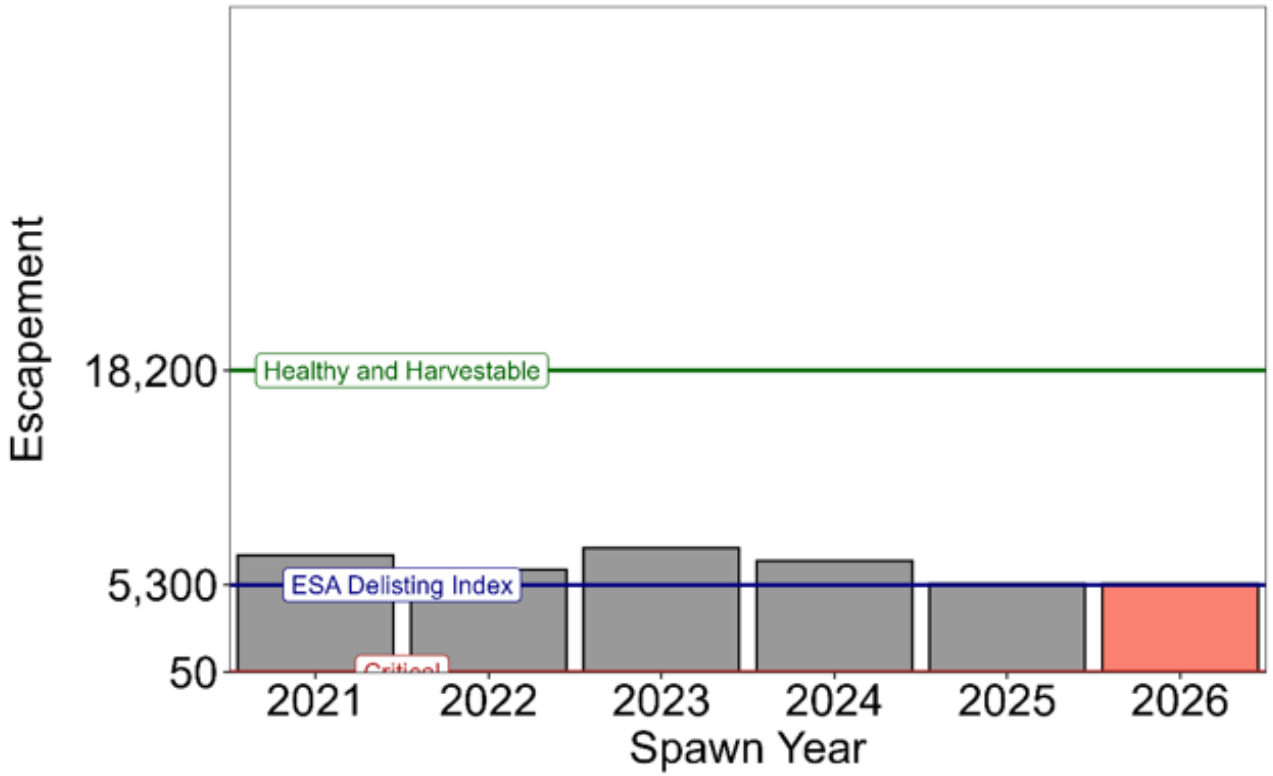
7 populations (21%)
Below 50 spawners
in 2025



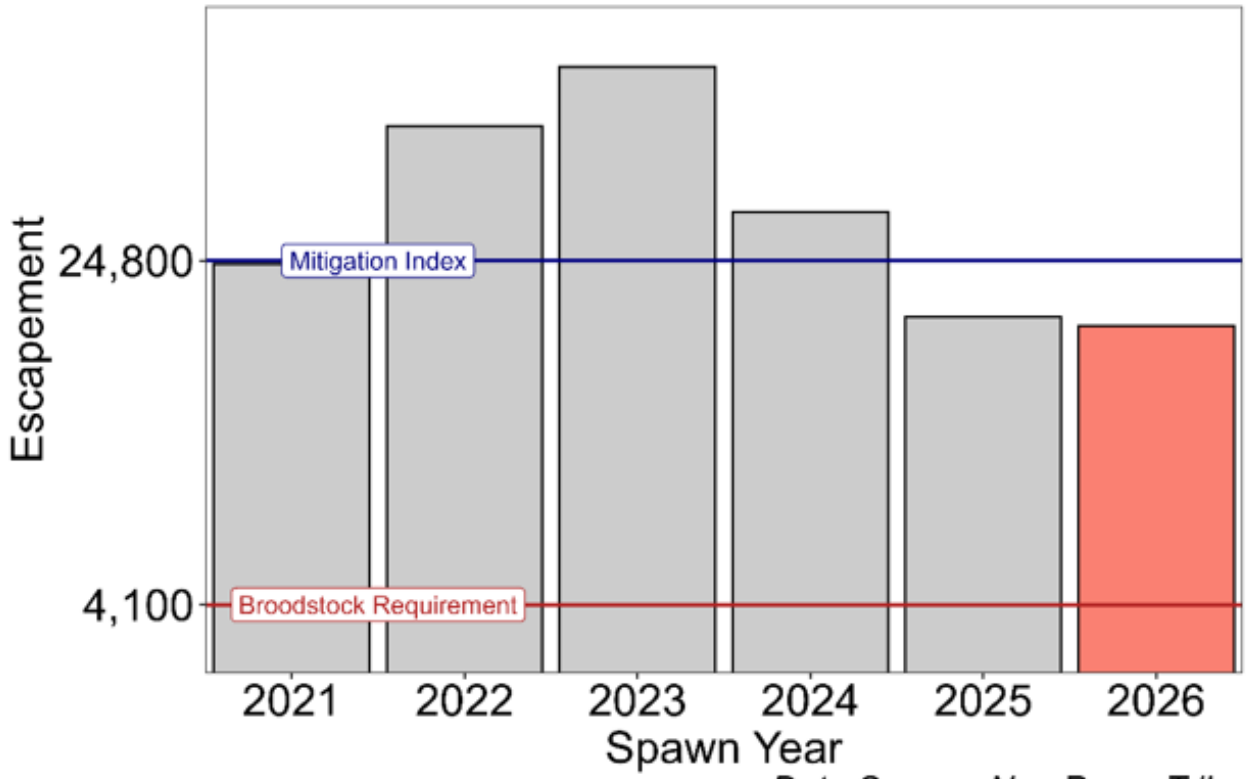
Adult Escapement at Lower Granite Dam

Fall Chinook

Natural-origin

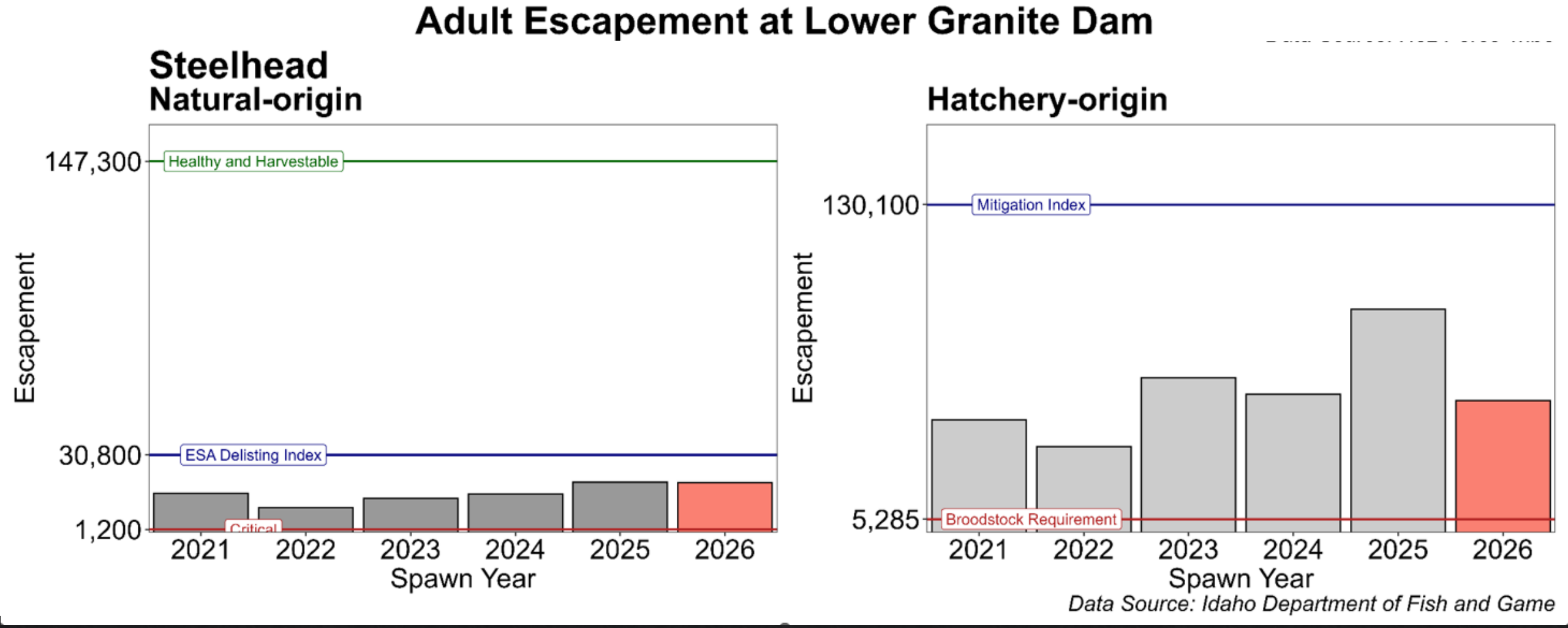


Hatchery-origin



Data Source: Nez Perce Tribe

Adult Escapement at Lower Granite Dam

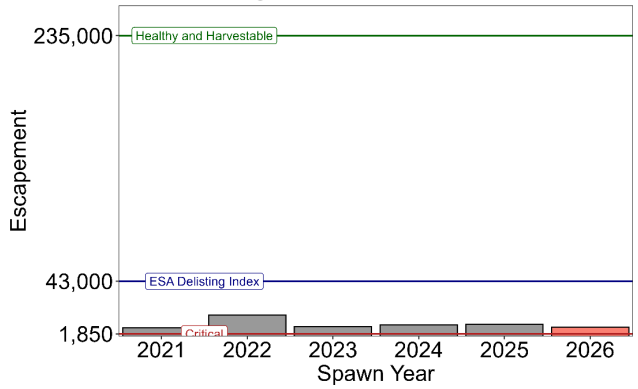


Data Source: Idaho Department of Fish and Game

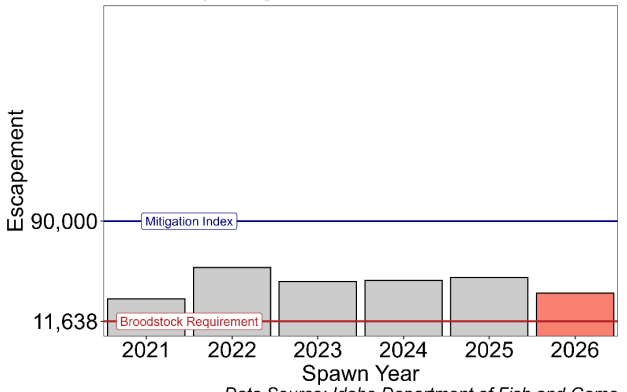
Adult Escapement at Lower Granite Dam

Spring-summer Chinook

Natural-origin



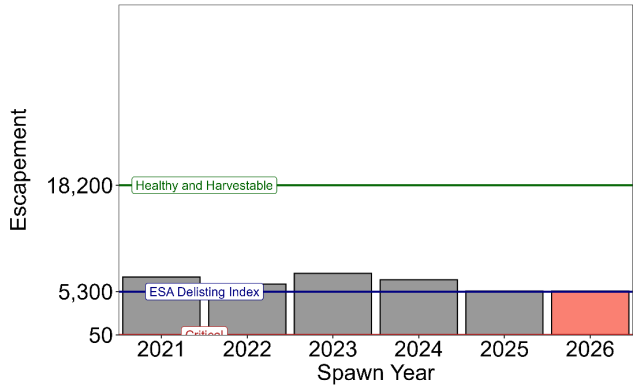
Hatchery-origin



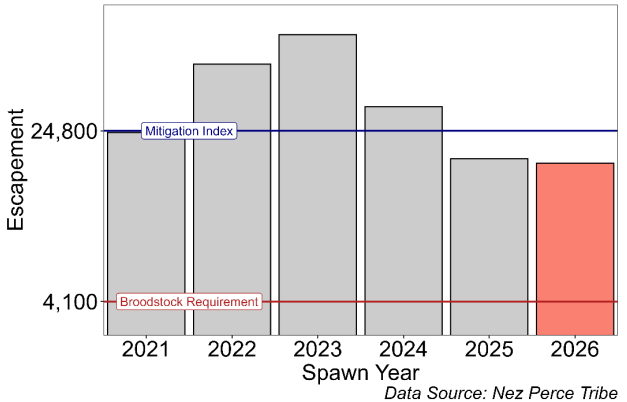
Data Source: Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Fall Chinook

Natural-origin



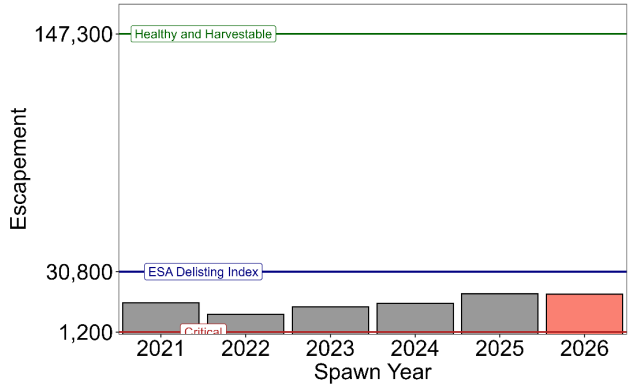
Hatchery-origin



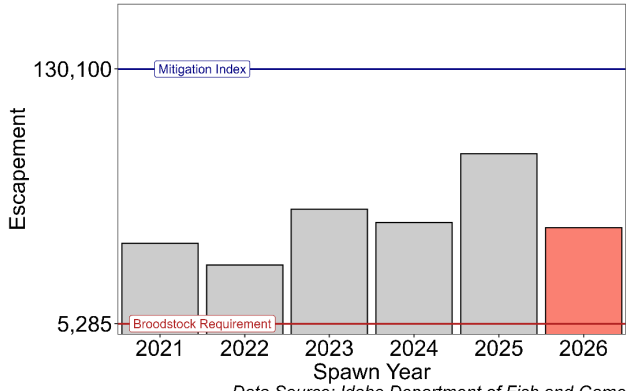
Data Source: Nez Perce Tribe

Steelhead

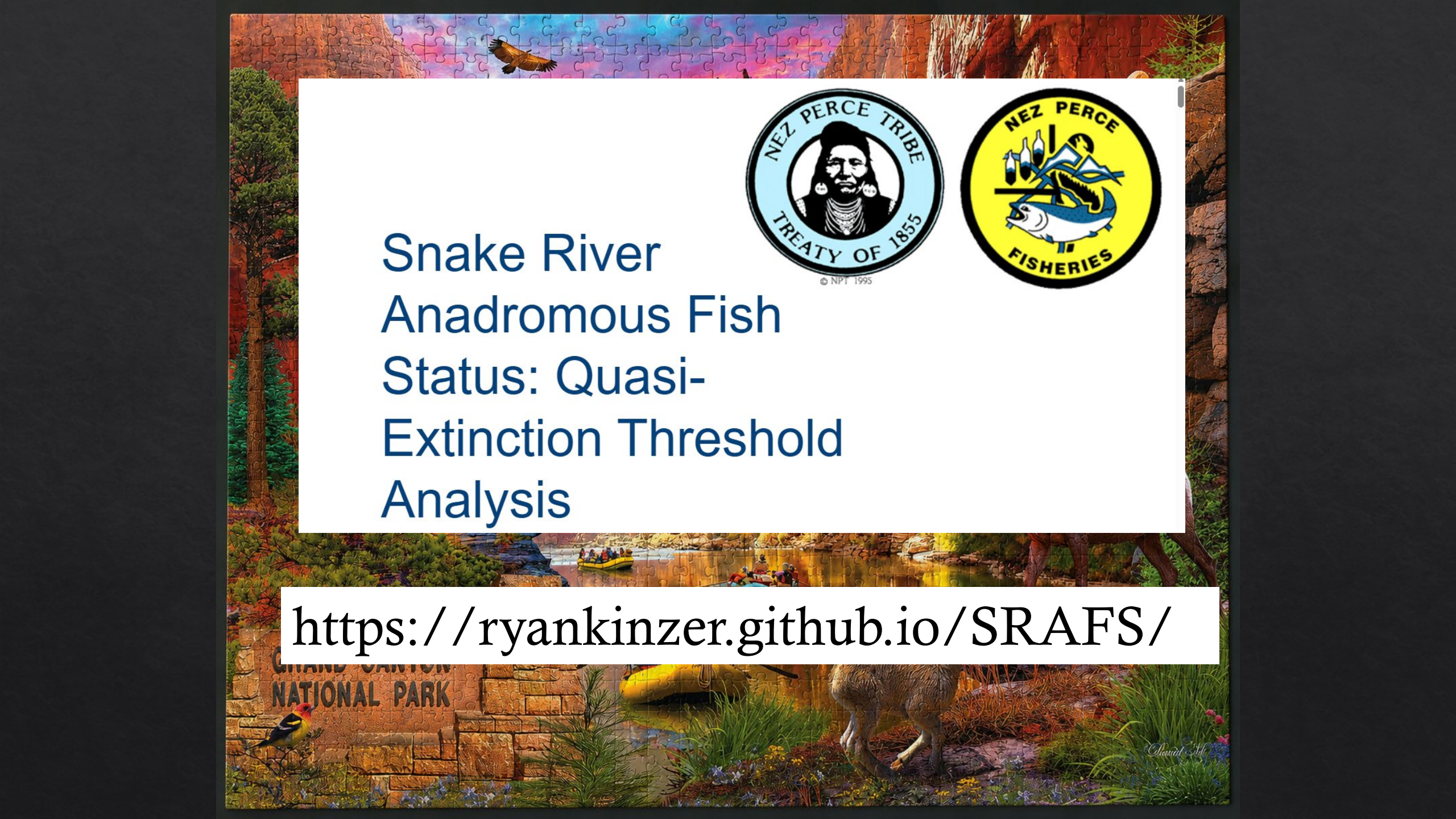
Natural-origin



Hatchery-origin



Data Source: Idaho Department of Fish and Game


NEZ PERCE TRIBE
TREATY OF 1855
© NPT 1995
NEZ PERCE
FISHERIES
Snake River Anadromous Fish Status: Quasi-Extinction Threshold Analysis
https://ryankinzer.github.io/SRAFS/
NATIONAL PARK