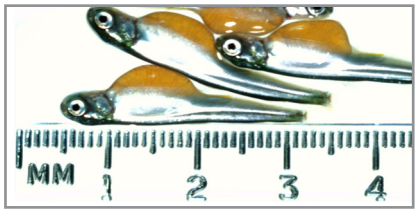
Mitchell Act Hatcheries

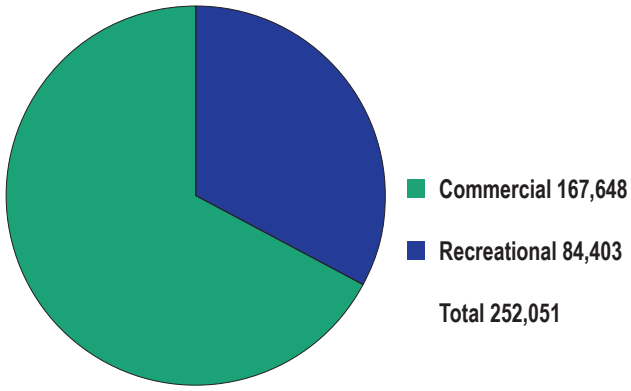
January 2011



Promoting Sustainable Fisheries, Recovery of Listed Salmonid Populations and Providing Regional Economic Benefits

Since 1938, Mitchell Act Hatcheries have been the mainstay of commercial, recreational and treaty-Tribal fisheries in the Columbia River Basin. These hatcheries produce roughly 50 percent of the salmon and steelhead released annually into the Columbia River, providing important economic, cultural and ecological benefits. Fish produced by these hatcheries partially compensate for fish and habitat losses caused by the construction of dams within the Federal Columbia River Power System. They also provide an important contribution to fulfilling Tribal treaties, helping sustain Tribal religion, culture and economic well being.

Columbia River Basin, Pacific Ocean & Puget Sound Mitchell Act Adult Harvest (2007)



Developed from data in Wegge, T. 2010. Economic Analysis of Mitchell Act Funded Hatchery Production. Technical Memorandum. TCW Economics. 13 pp.

New Initiative for Hatchery Reform

In FY 2010 Congress provided $10 million in new funding for improving Mitchell Act hatchery programs to ensure that both conservation and harvest goals are met. The goal is to operate hatcheries based on the best scientific principles while contributing to sustainable fisheries, meeting our commitments to Tribal treaties, and helping to recover naturally spawning populations of salmon and steelhead.

Consistent with recent hatchery program reviews, Mitchell Act programs are implementing best management practices (BMPs) and other Hatchery Scientific Review Group hatchery reform recommendations. These hatchery reform efforts include a number of improved management practices and monitoring and assessment of BMP protocols.

For more information visit www.nwr.noaa.gov/Salmon-Harvest-Hatcheries/Hatcheries/Mitchell-Act-Program.cfm

Regional Economic Benefit

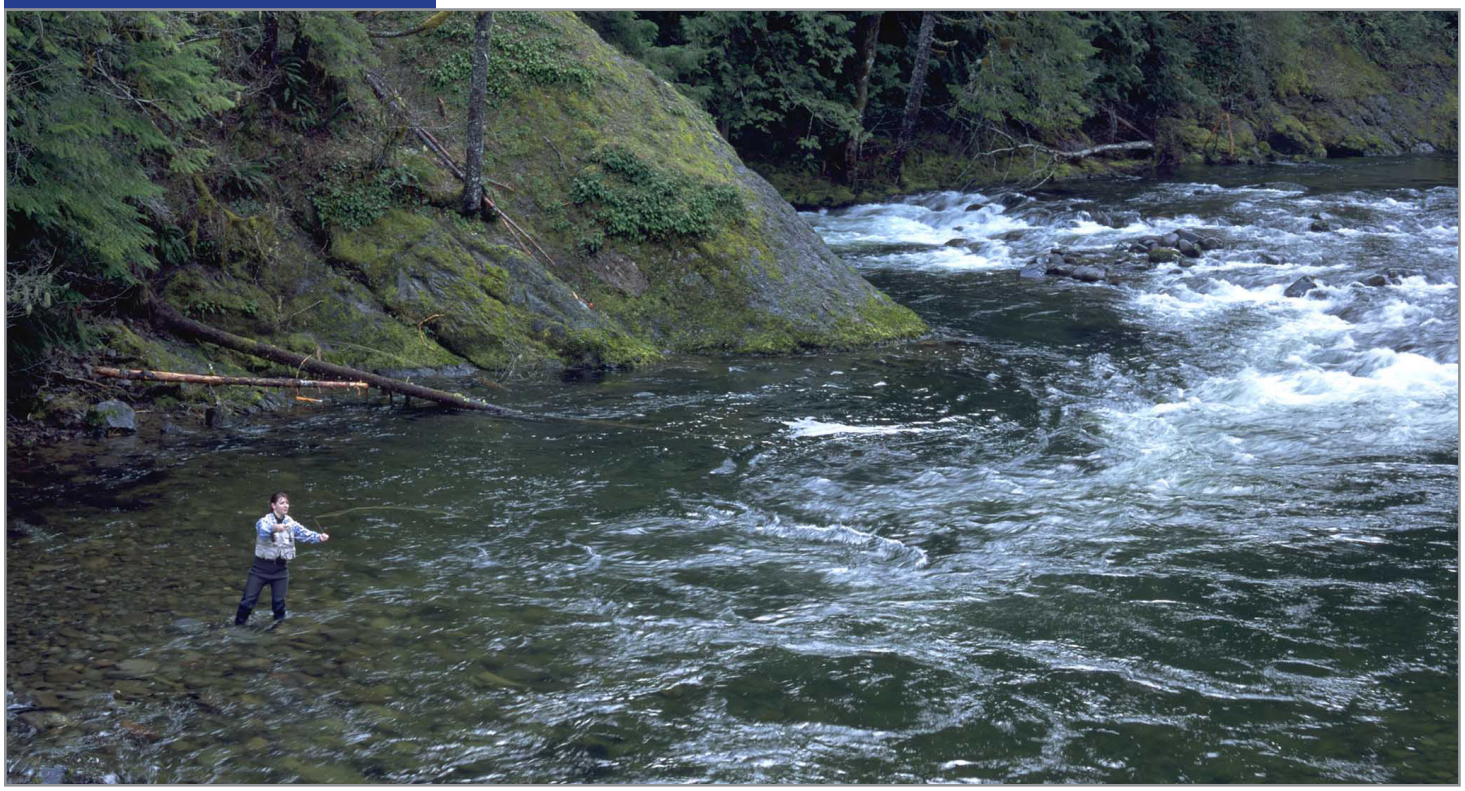
The Mitchell Act provides a positive economic benefit to people of the Columbia Basin in terms of personal income and total income for fishery harvest and fish production related activities. Just over 870 full- and part-time jobs are sustained by the program amounting to a total of $36 million in personal income for the region.

Sport, Tribal and Commercial Fisheries

Releases of salmon smolts from Mitchell Act Program hatcheries translates into 250,000 fish harvested to sustain commercial, recreational and tribal fisheries. Hatchery production of Mitchell Act Program facilities is coordinated through the U.S. *v*. Oregon process. In addition, fish produced from the Columbia River Basin are also an important component of Canadian and Alaskan ocean fisheries.

Cultural Uses

Salmon, along with many other fish and wildlife, play an integral part of Tribal religion, culture, and physical sustenance. Tribal treaties reserved fishing rights for many Northwest Tribes. These fishing rights apply to on-reservation and off-reservation usual and accustomed fishing areas and they allow for a shared harvest (with 50% reserved for tribal fisheries) and the right to sell or barter harvested fish under certain conditions and in certain areas. Mitchell Act hatcheries provide much of the production supporting these important cultural uses.

Habitat Access Improvements

In addition to benefits described above, the Mitchell Act provides fish passage and screening for natural origin smolts throughout the Columbia River Basin. This program has opened up over 7,000 miles of habitat through 112 fish passage projects throughout Oregon, Washington and Idaho. The Mitchell Act itself funded over 2,600 irrigation screening projects but the real value comes from the ability to leverage Mitchell Act funds by partnering with Bonneville Power Administration, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation, increasing the total number of screening a passage programs completed in the Basin.