



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

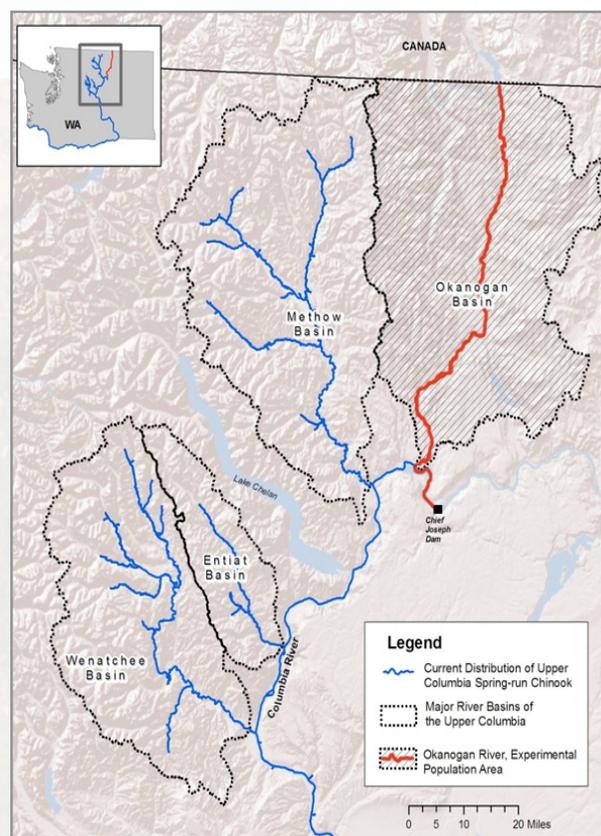
**WEST  
COAST  
REGION**

**The successful reintroduction of this population, while not essential to recover the species, will reduce its risk of extinction and benefit all who live, work, and play in the Upper Columbia River.**

# NOAA Fisheries paves way for reintroduction of spring Chinook population to Washington's Okanogan River

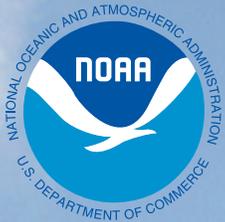
## Background

Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon once ranged throughout north-central Washington and Canada, inhabiting the waters of the Upper Columbia River sub-basin. Construction of Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams displaced salmon from much of their historic habitat, and this loss of range, combined with other challenges, contributed to the species' decline. In 1999, NOAA Fisheries listed Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). There currently are three remaining populations of Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook: the Methow, Entiat, and Wenatchee. A fourth population historically inhabited the Okanogan River sub-basin, but was extirpated in the 1930s.



## Reintroducing spring-Chinook advances salmon recovery

Today, efforts are underway to recover endangered Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon. To increase their numbers and distribution, thus facilitating the species' long-term recovery, NOAA Fisheries designated a "non-essential experimental population" of spring-run Chinook in the Okanogan River sub-basin under Section 10(j) of the ESA. The reintroduction is an action that will lower the species' risk of extinction and contribute to its recovery, as identified in the 2007 *Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon & Steelhead Recovery Plan*, but the ESA 10(j) designation allows for more flexible management of the population. Landowners conducting otherwise lawful activities, for instance, will not be subject to additional regulatory restrictions.



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The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation requested the designation of an experimental spring-run Chinook population in 2010. After careful evaluation, NOAA Fisheries released a 2013 rule proposing to move forward with the 10(j) designation and a final rule in July of 2014. Reintroduction efforts will begin in 2015. Once the appropriate permits are in place, fish from the Winthrop National Fish Hatchery will be used to establish the experimental population. These fish are from the neighboring river sub-basin and most genetically similar to the historical Okanogan population.

### **Designating an Experimental Population under the Endangered Species Act**

The Endangered Species Act allows NOAA Fisheries to authorize experimental populations. This designation supports several conservation and societal goals. It allows us to advance recovery objectives by re-establishing self-sustaining populations, while also protecting local landowners and municipalities from incurring undue risk of violating normal ESA restrictions.

#### **Learn more...**

##### **Reintroduction of spring Chinook to the Okanogan sub-basin:**

[www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected\\_species/salmon\\_steelhead/salmon\\_and\\_steelhead\\_listings/chinook/upper\\_columbia\\_river\\_spring\\_run/upper\\_columbia\\_river\\_spring\\_run\\_chinook.html](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/salmon_and_steelhead_listings/chinook/upper_columbia_river_spring_run/upper_columbia_river_spring_run_chinook.html)

##### **Salmon & Steelhead Recovery Planning in the Upper Columbia River:**

[www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected\\_species/salmon\\_steelhead/recovery\\_planning\\_and\\_implementation/upper\\_columbia/upper\\_columbia\\_river\\_salmon\\_recovery\\_sub\\_domain.html](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/recovery_planning_and_implementation/upper_columbia/upper_columbia_river_salmon_recovery_sub_domain.html)