

Select Area Fishery

A select area fishery is a fishery located in a select area that has known salmon stocks that have been produced specifically for that area, so that sport and commercial fishing can occur without impact on threatened or endangered stocks. The select areas target 100% harvest, because there is no need for escapement for egg taking since the eggs for future production are taken at other hatchery sites for rearing and release at the select area sites.

During their time in the net-pens, the fish imprint to the scent of the bay, giving them the homing instinct to return to that location for harvest.

The fish are released from the pens to migrate the short distance to the Pacific Ocean, where they live out their ocean cycle. Coho have a three-year life span, of which half is spent in the ocean. Chinook live three to five years of which six to eighteen months are spent in fresh water before migrating to the sea. When the adult salmon return from the ocean, they "home in" or head for the net pens where they were released and mill around outside, which is exactly what is intended. Fishers have the opportunity to catch these fish which might have ended up as a hatchery return and possible surplus. The desired result is that 100 percent of these fish will be caught.

Before their release, the smolts from each group are marked so they can be identified when they return as adults and are harvested. Tiny coded-wire tags are inserted into the snout and the adipose fin is clipped. The fin is located on the topside of the fish near its tail.

The release of the fish and the dates of the fishing seasons are timed to minimize competition and other impacts on endangered Columbia River stocks. Experience shows these harvest activities can occur in these areas without depleting protected runs.

The fish spend two weeks to six months in net-pens and do not impact an area as much as farmed fish that spend their entire lives in pens.