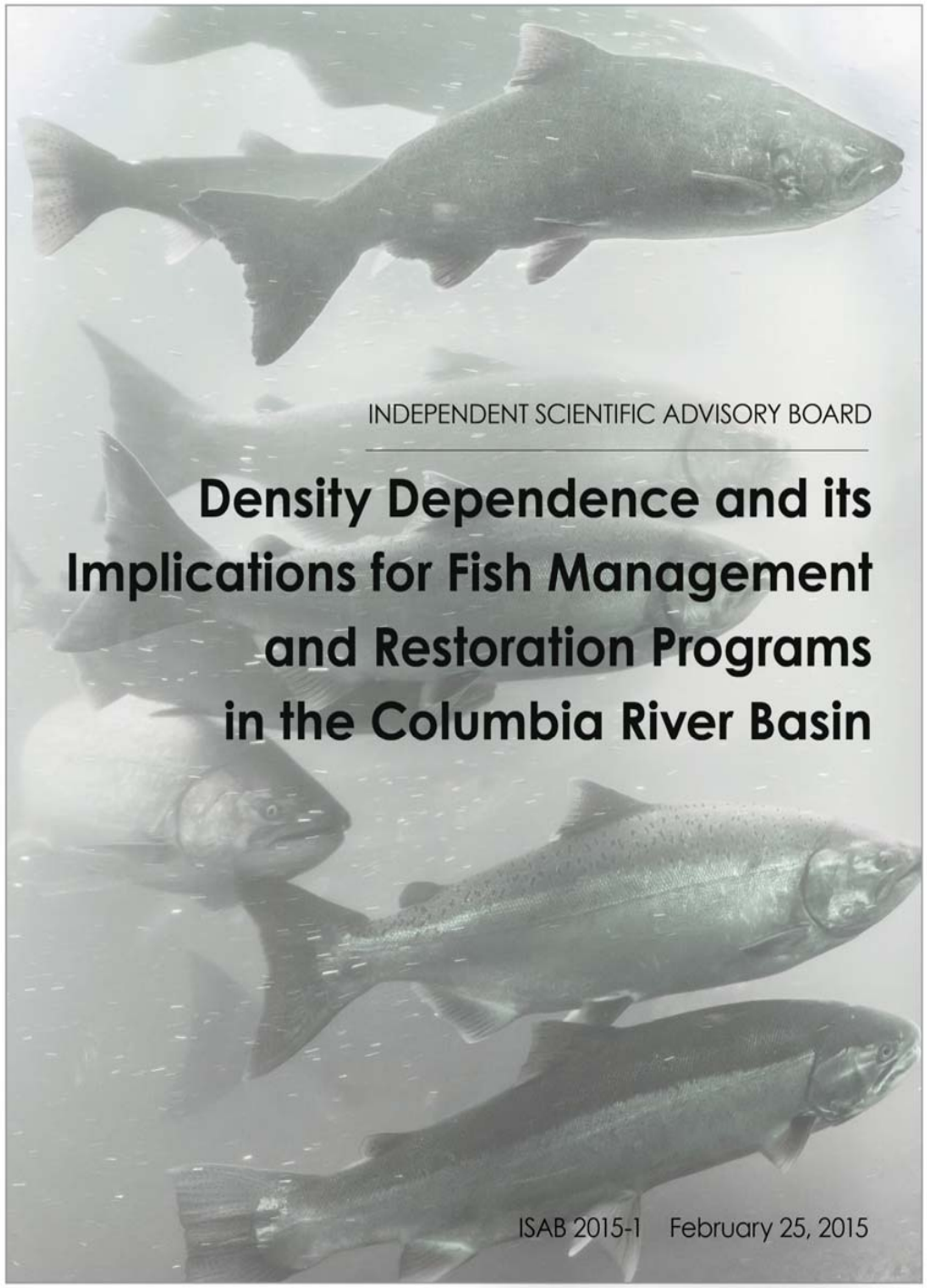

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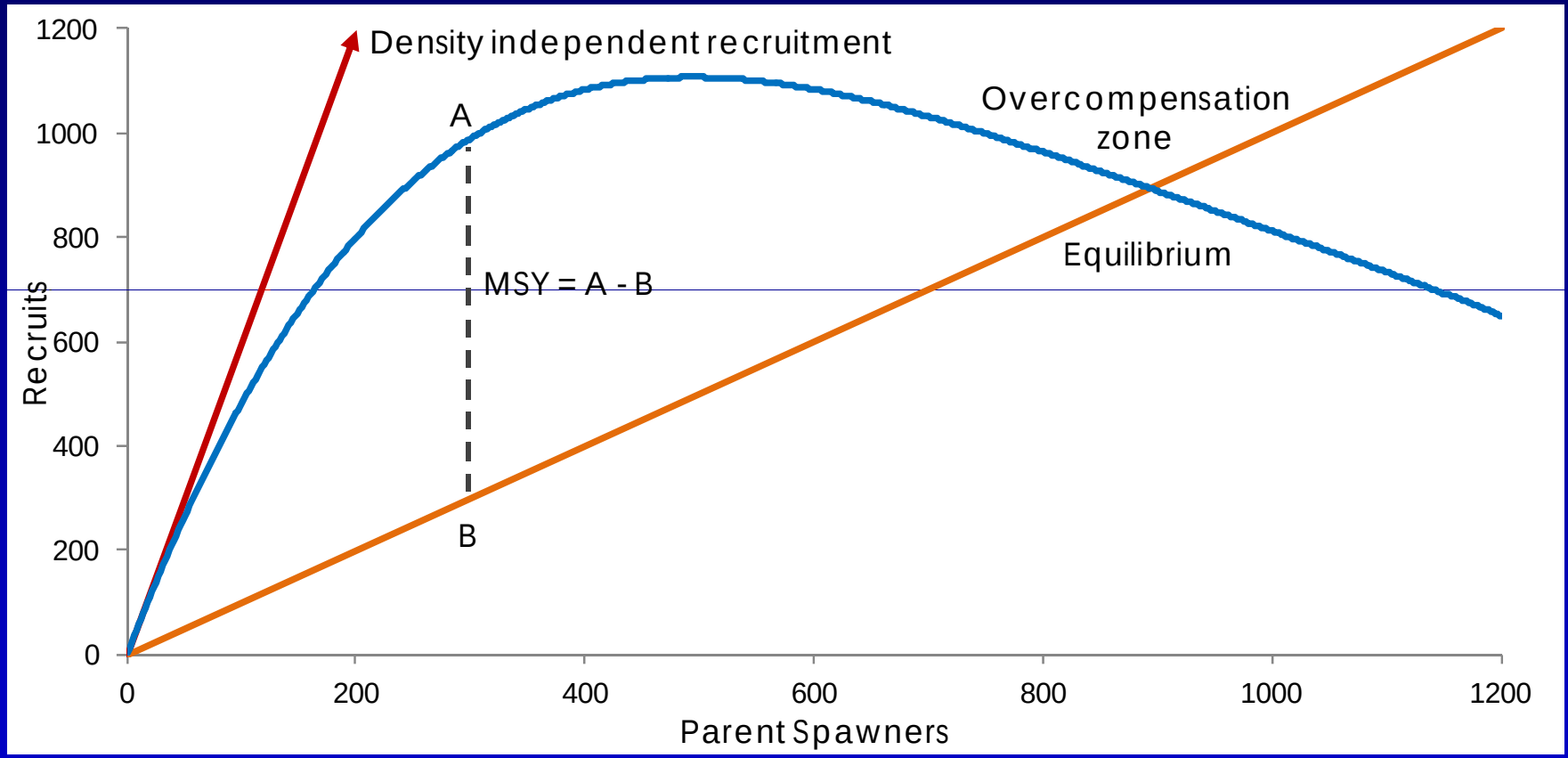
Presentation to Council
March 11, 2015

Key Finding

Density dependence is now evident in most of the ESA-listed populations examined and appears strong enough to constrain their recovery.

What is density dependence and why is it important?

Example: Ricker Curve



1) More resources per individual at lower densities: better growth & survival.
2) Compensatory density dependence provides resilience for populations to rebound from low abundance and enables stability.

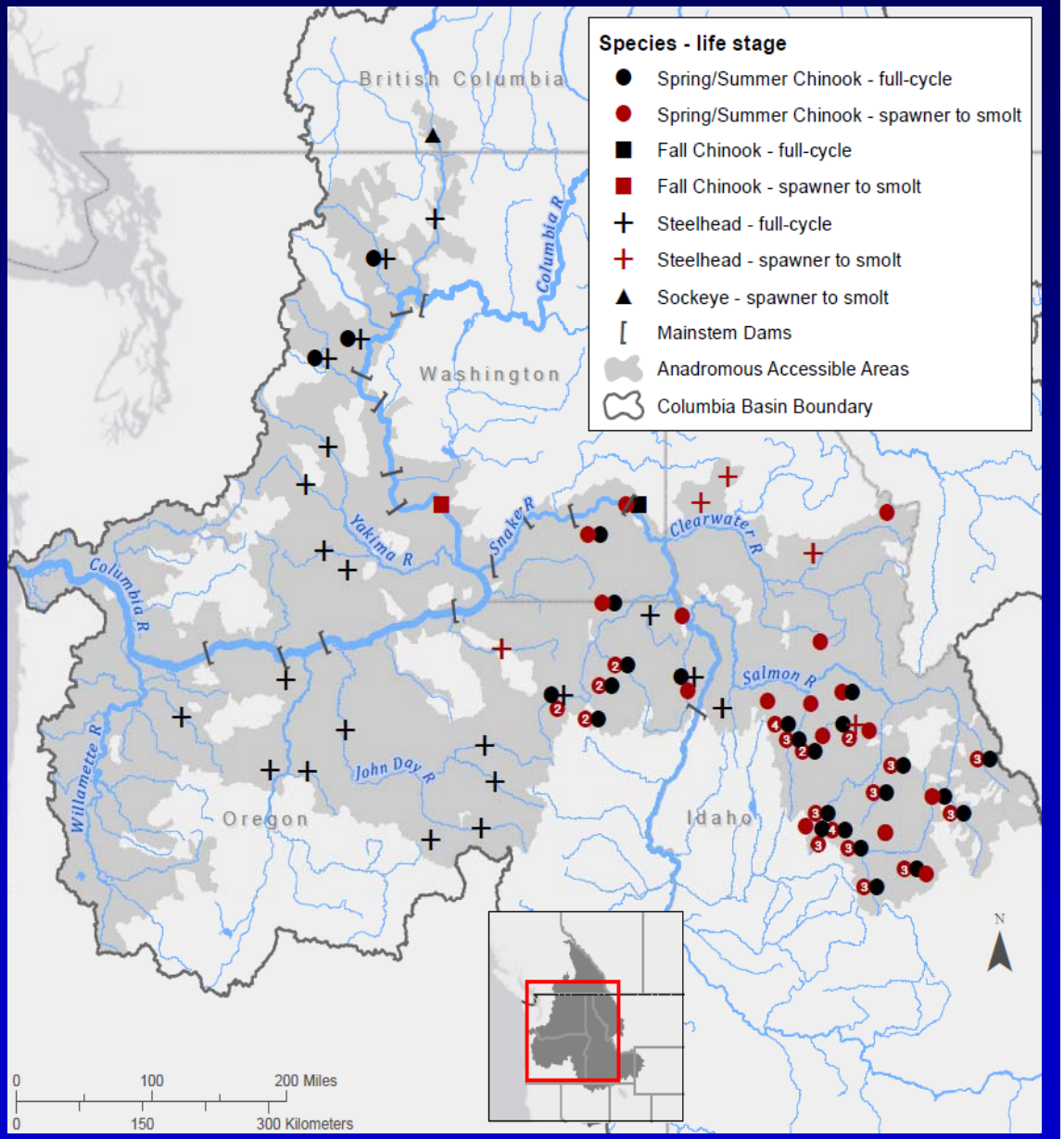
Key Recommendation

Account for density effects when planning and evaluating:

- habitat restoration actions
- hatchery supplementation
- spawning escapement goals

Compensatory Density Dependent Studies: Where?

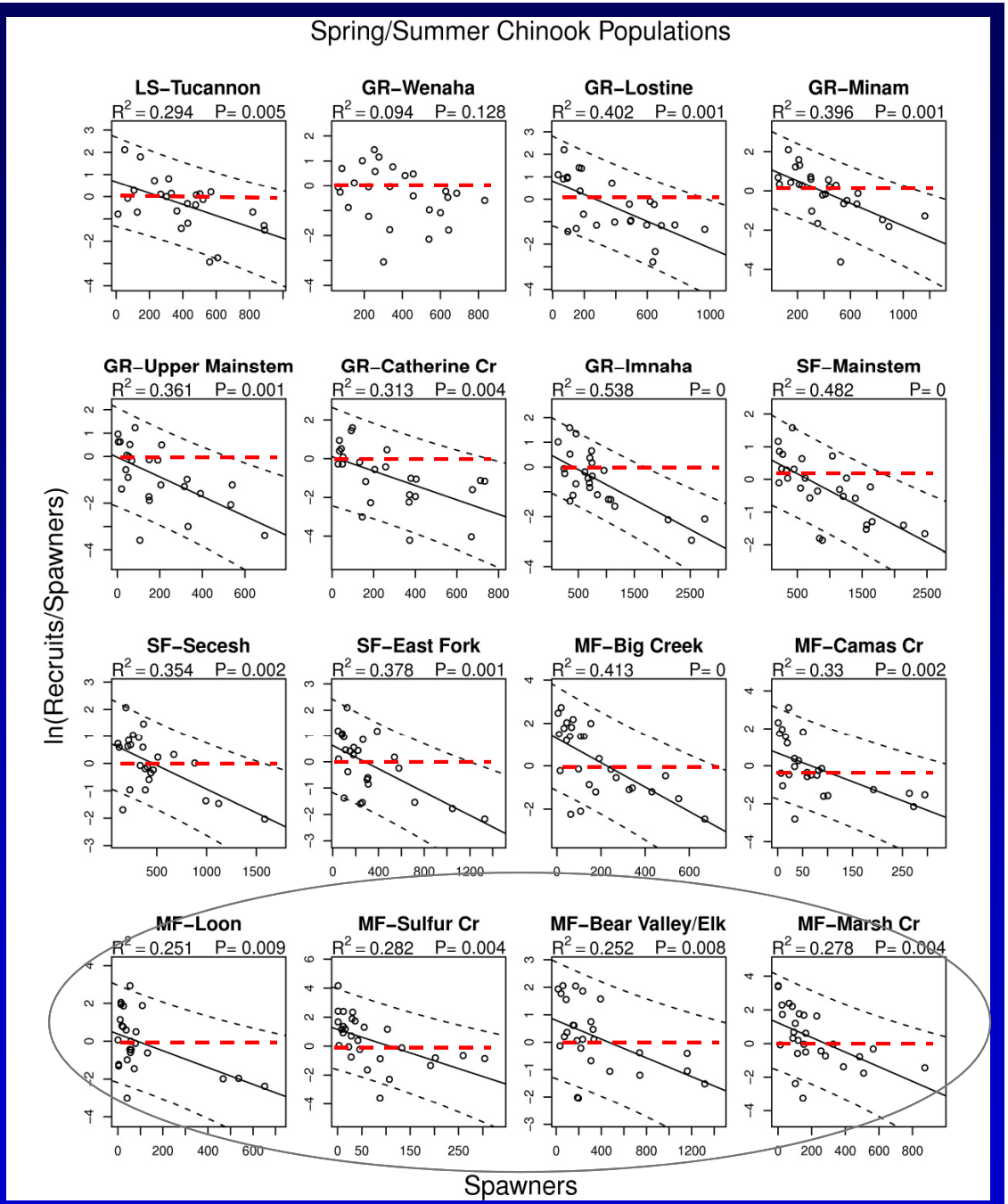
- Primarily spring/summer Chinook & steelhead in the interior.
- Few studies below Bonneville & during juvenile emigration.
- Few coho studies.



Map produced for ISAB by Brett Holycross and Van C. Hare, PSMFC.

Life Cycle Density Dependence

- 25 of 27 Columbia R spring/summer Chinook populations: strong DD.
- Snake R fall Chinook: DD
- All 20 Interior Columbia River steelhead populations: Strong DD.
- R/S often < 1 (must improve conditions to achieve recovery)
- What life stage?

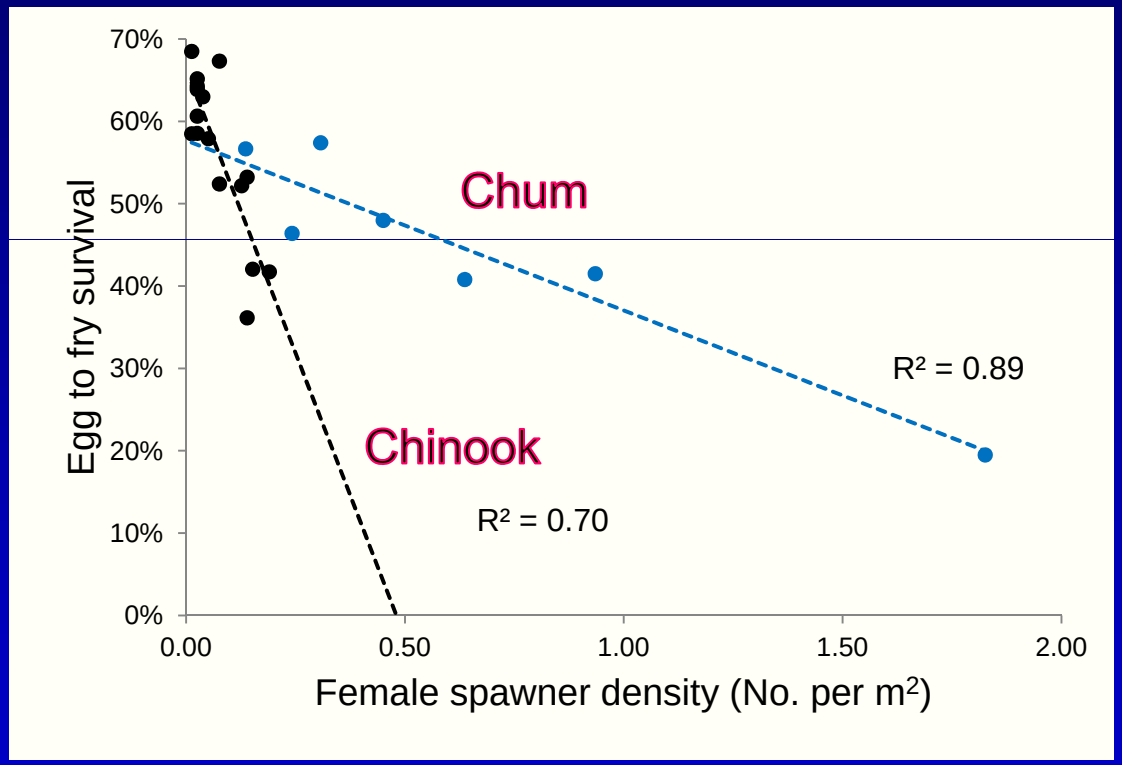


Source: Zabel & Cooney 2013

Spawning Stage: Chinook v. Chum

Experimental Spawning Channel

- Egg to fry survival is density dependent
- Density dependence “stronger” in Chinook
- Chum do better than Chinook when high spawning density
- Little information for spawning stage in Columbia

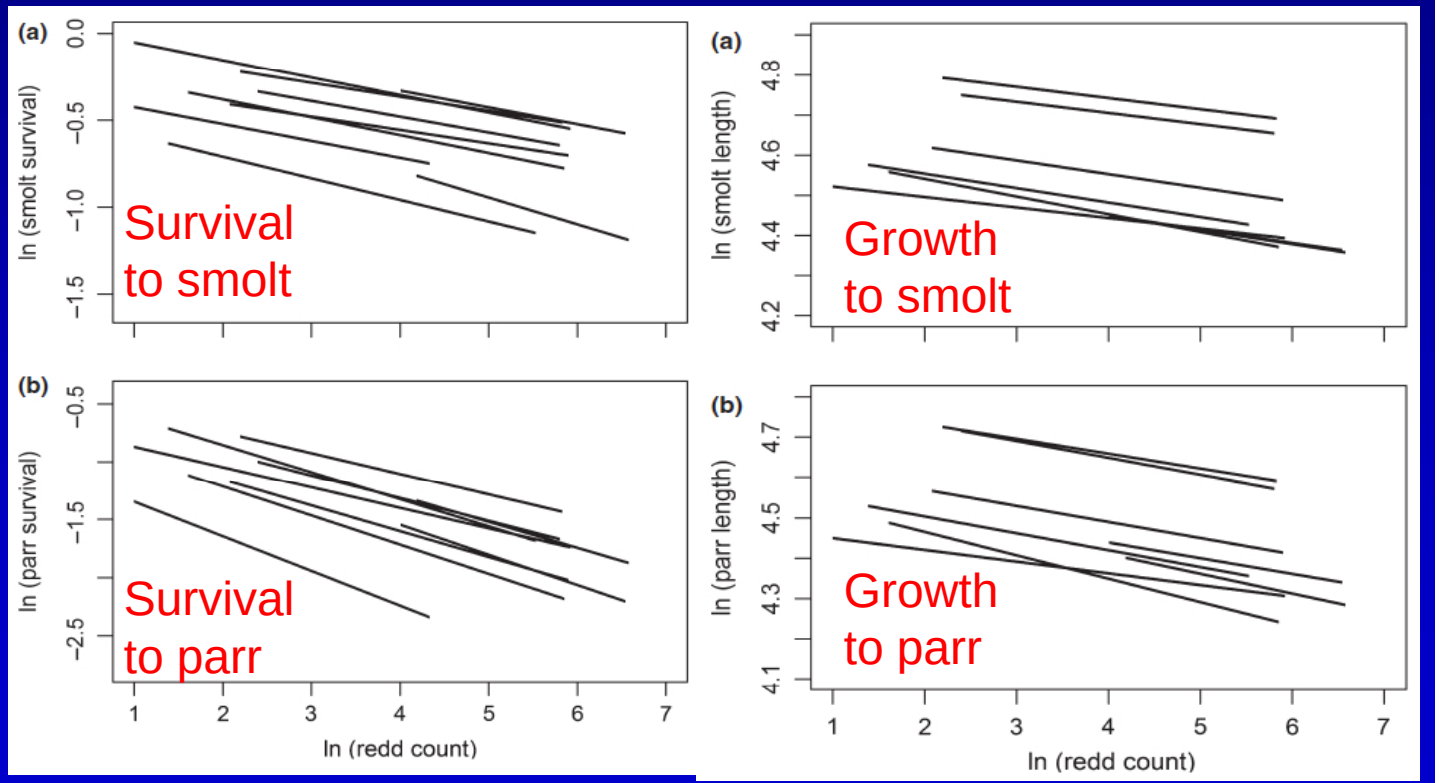


Source: Schroder 1974, Schroder et al. 2008

Spawner to Smolt Stage: Growth & Survival is Density Dependent

- Example: Snake R spring/summer Chinook
- 8 populations; other examples in report
- Density dependent dispersal observed & is key to recovery.

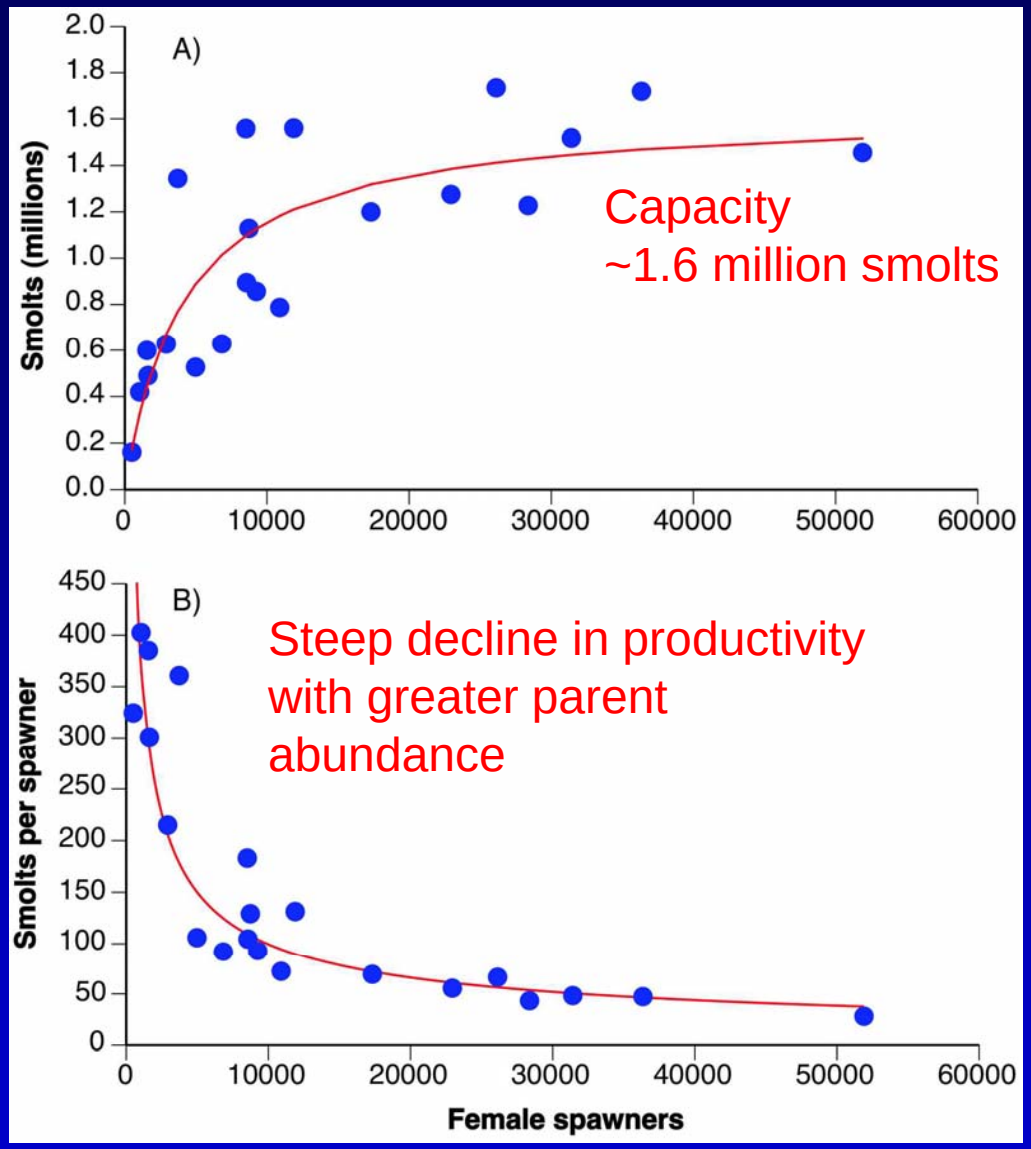
Density effects such as this can guide restoration actions



Walters et al. (2013a)

Snake R Spring/Summer Chinook: spawner to smolt

- Strong density dependence
- > ~20,000 females may not produce more smolts
- Smolt production in 1960s: ~2-4 million.
- <u>Population resilience at low abundance</u>



Source: Raymond (1979), Petrosky et al. (2001), Zabel et al. (2006), Kennedy et al. (2013), T. Copeland, IDFG.

Key Finding

Density dependence is now evident in most of the ESA-listed populations examined and appears strong enough to constrain their recovery.

Why? Aren't current abundances relatively low?

Pre-development Capacity of the Columbia River Basin

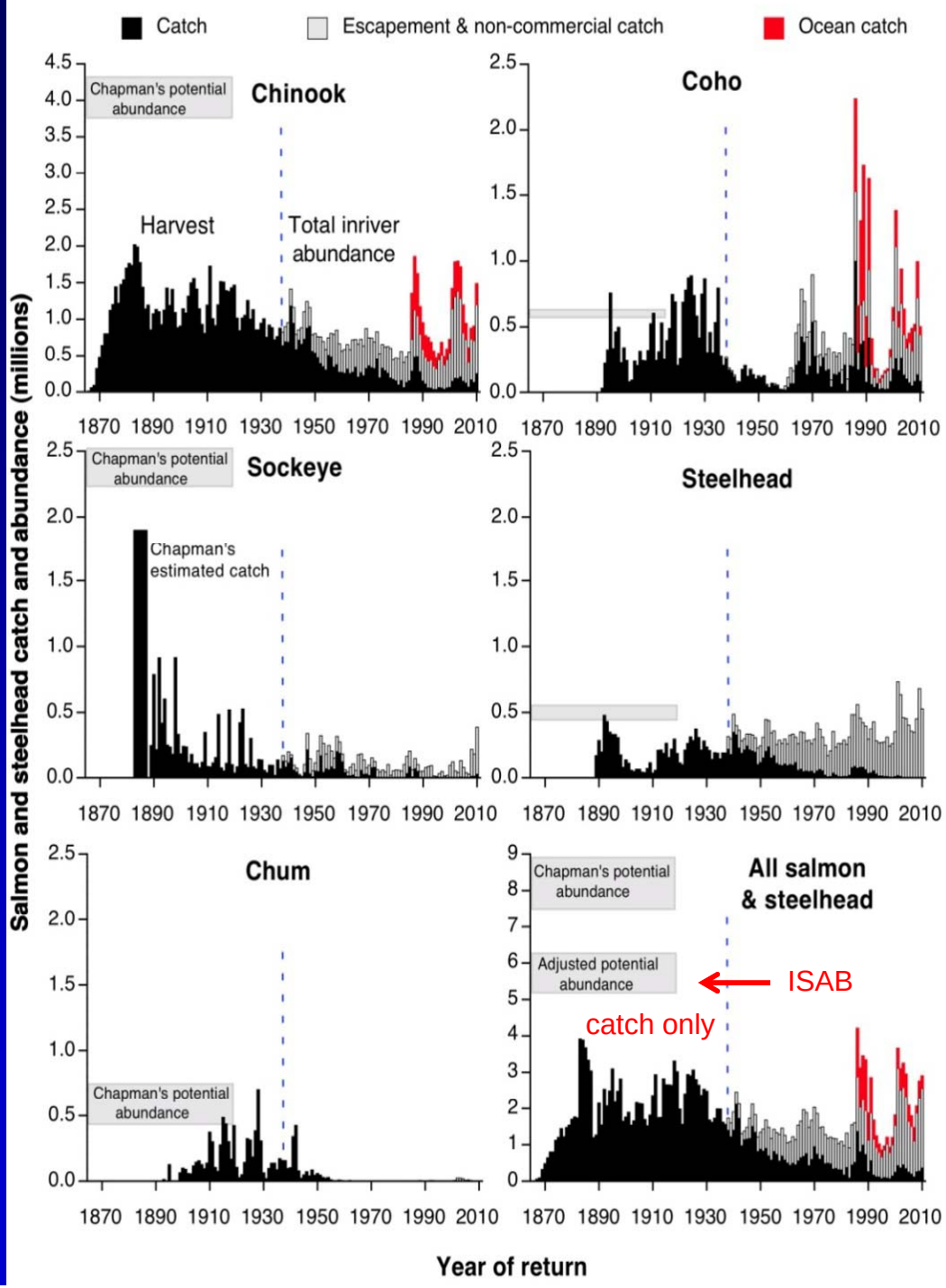
All Salmon & Steelhead

- Chapman (1986):

  7.5-8.9 million

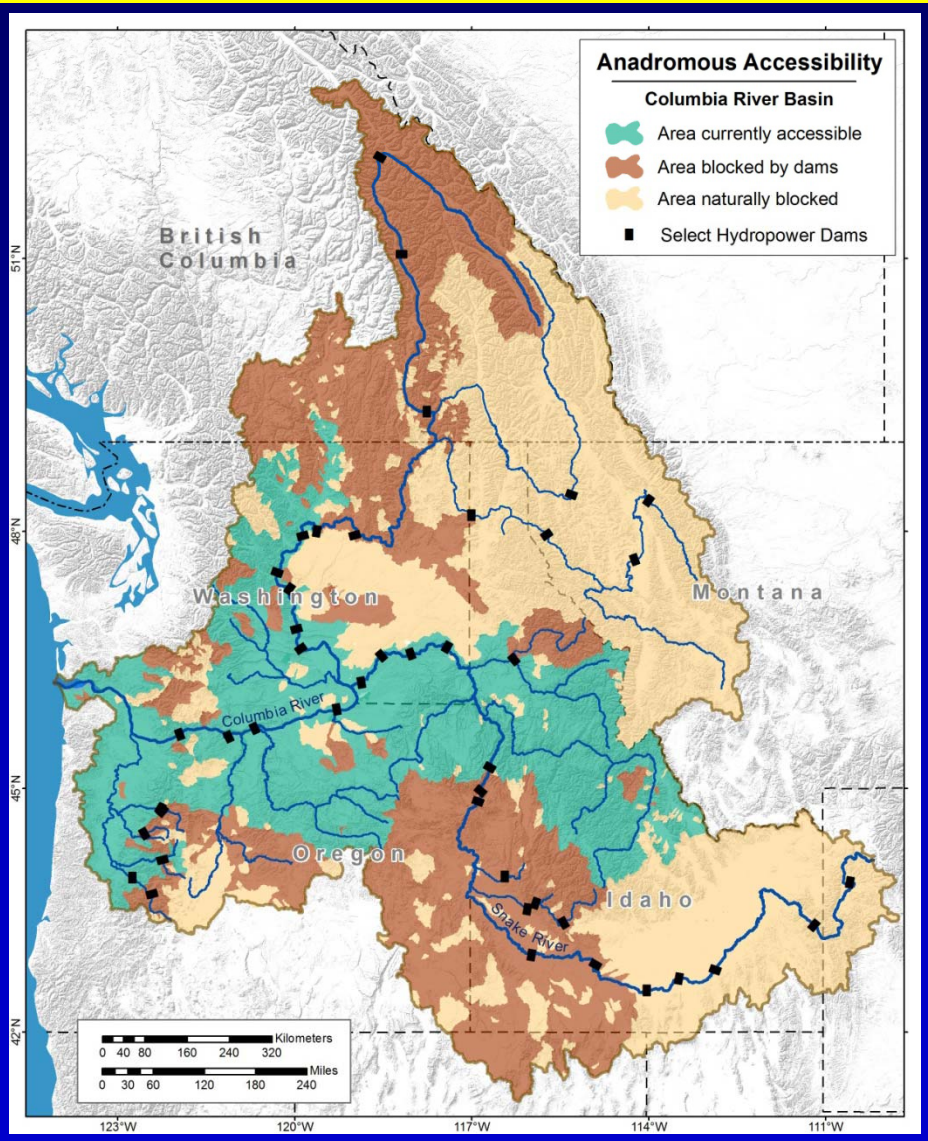
- NPPC (1986): 9-16 million

- ISAB: ~~5-9 million



Area Blocked to Anadromous Salmon

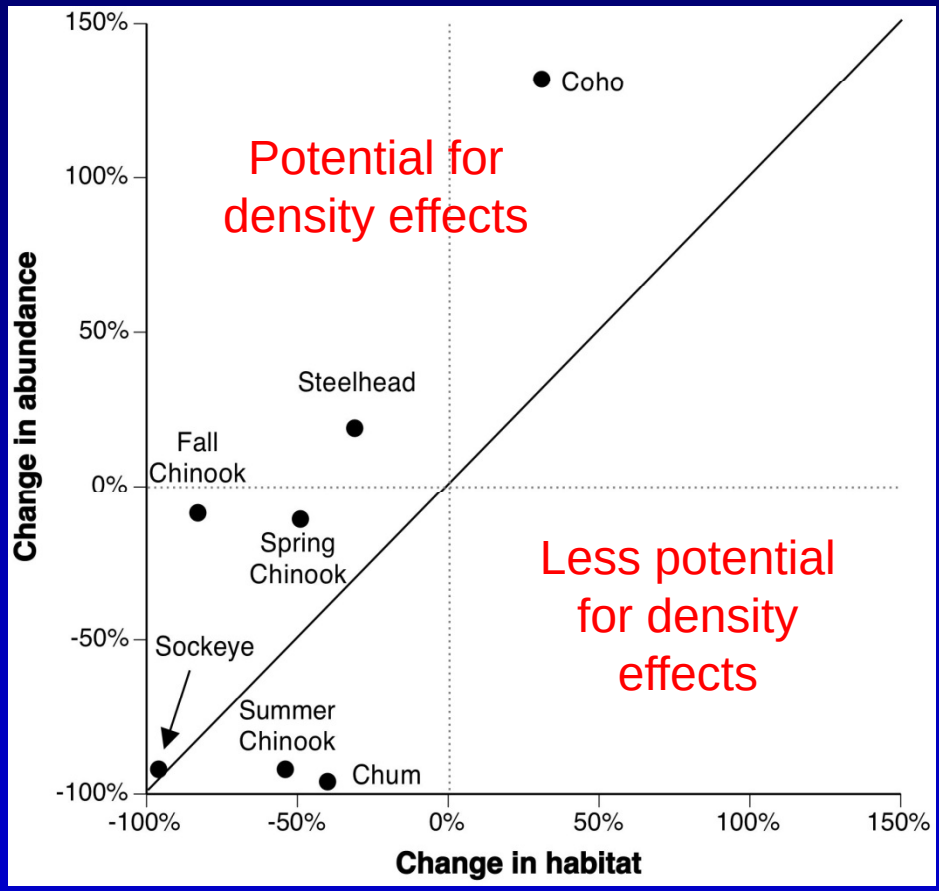
- 31% of previously accessible habitat now blocked.
- Impact varies by species.



Map produced for ISAB by Van C. Hare, PSMFC

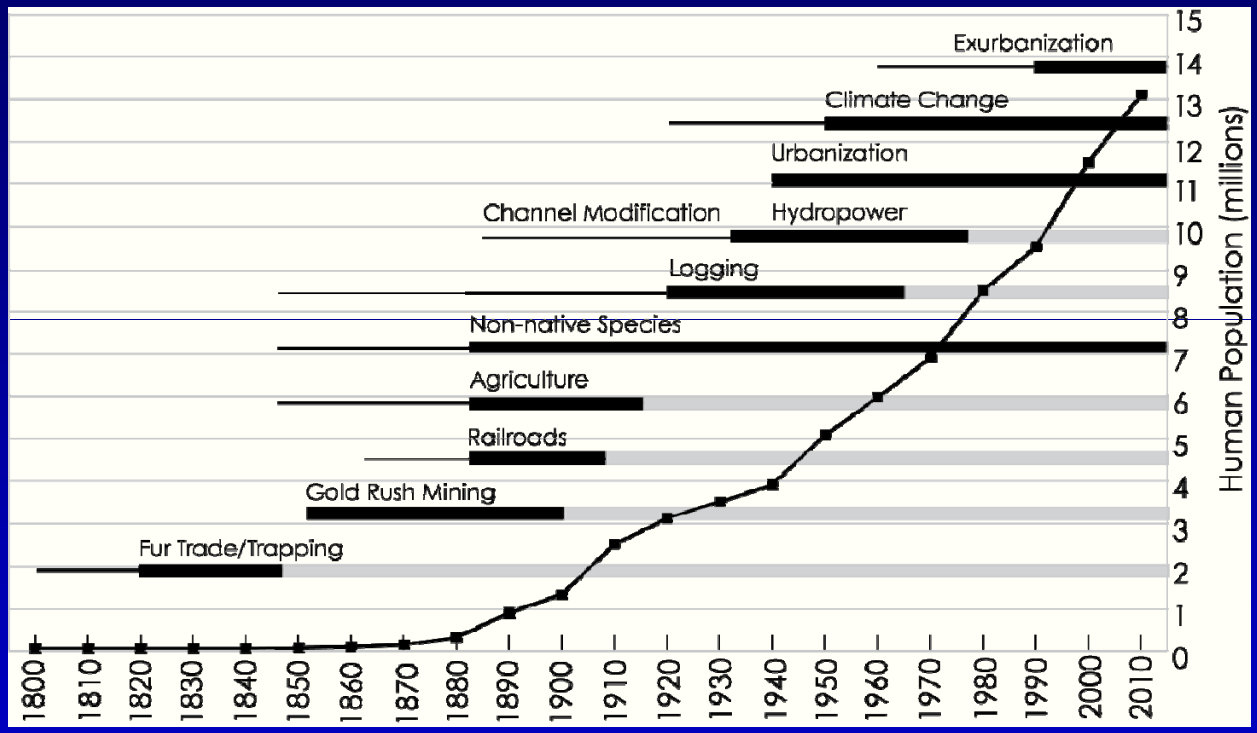
Could “density” (wild & hatchery salmon) be greater today?

- Initial evaluation of potential density effects.
- Change (%) in abundance versus accessible habitat: ~1850 to 1986-2010
- Spring & fall Chinook, coho, steelhead
- Caution!



Columbia is Novel Ecosystem

- Habitat change impacts *intrinsic* productivity & capacity
- Salmon capacity reduced by loss of diverse habitats that support diversity of life histories.
- Invasion by non-native species



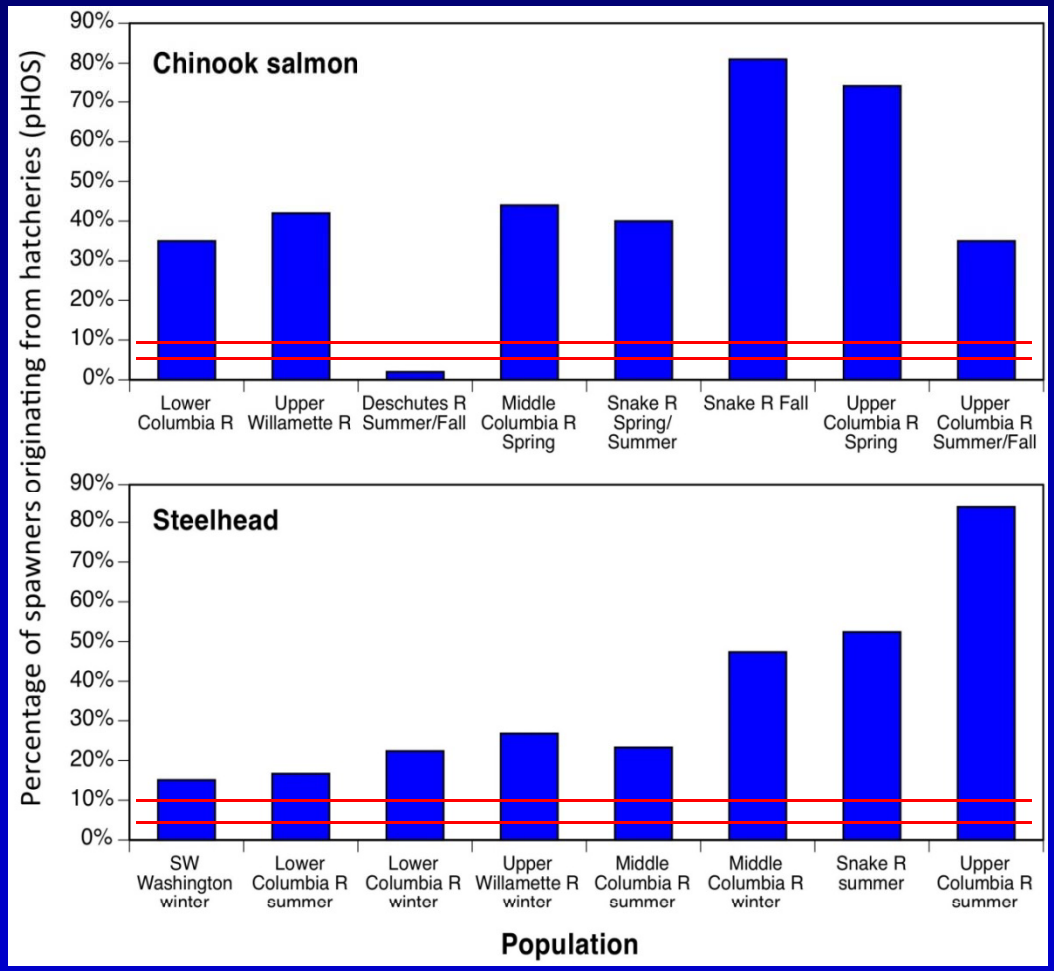
Key Findings (Anadromous) cont'd

Hatchery releases account for a large proportion of current salmon abundance

- Total smolt densities may be higher now than historically.
- By creating unintended density effects on natural populations, supplementation may fail to boost natural origin returns despite its effectiveness at increasing total spawning abundance.

Hatchery Contribution to Natural Spawners: Supplementation & Straying

- Supplementation & straying contribute to density effects
- Many spring/summer Chinook & steelhead not sustainable at higher densities
- Integrated hatchery approach not possible without sustainable natural population
- pHOS guidelines for segregated hatchery shown (red lines)

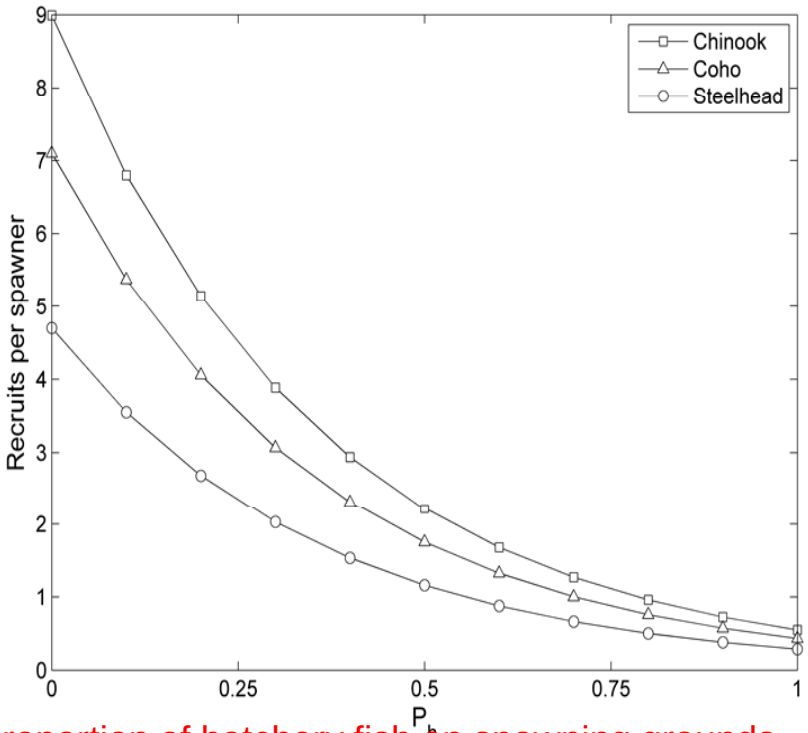


Modeled data provided by L. Mobrand, HSRG, February 2013.

“Supplementation” Effects on Recruitment

“Supplementation” lowers *intrinsic* productivity & resilience of Chinook, coho, steelhead (20 yrs of data, 71 populations).

Supplementation may not provide population boost even with increased spawner abundance (Spring/Summer Chinook).

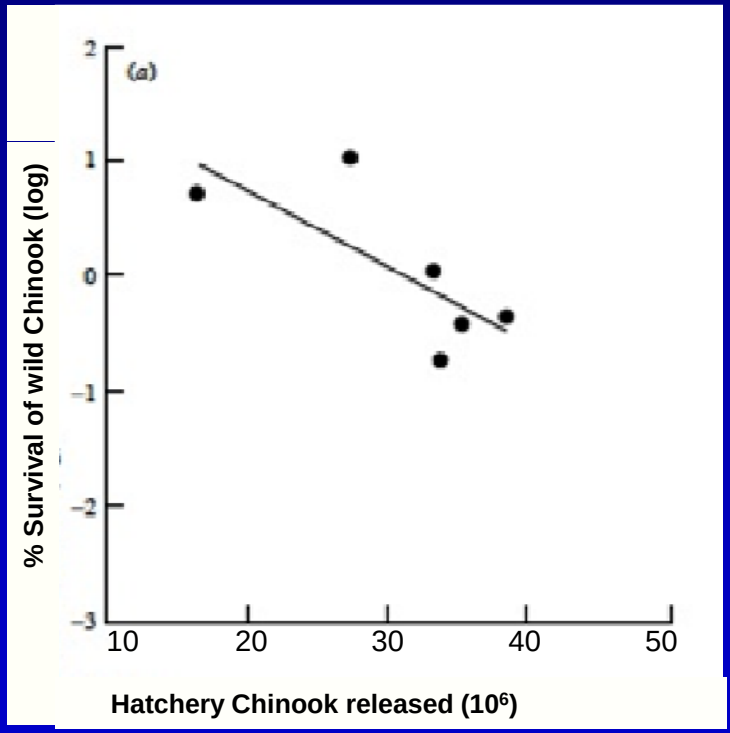


Proportion of hatchery fish on spawning grounds

Chilcote et al. (2013)
Buhle et al. (2013, 2014)

Estuary and Ocean Rearing

- Density dependence in estuary & ocean is a data gap for Columbia R species
- Evidence for density dependence in estuary and ocean found in other regions
- Estuarine habitat restoration in Columbia Basin focuses on habitat diversity and habitat capacity to support subyearling salmonids
- Spring Chinook survival at sea declined with hatchery Chinook releases but only with poor ocean conditions



Source: Levin et al. 2001

Part II: "Resident" trout, kokanee, sturgeon, and lamprey

- Different animals, different questions
- Trout: Four questions re: DD and carrying capacity (CC)
  - Habitat restoration ***Complicated***
  - Hatchery stocking ***Clear***
  - Nonnative trout invasions ***Relatively clear***
  - Angling regulations/closures ***Relatively clear***

- Does habitat restoration increase CC, and trout density?
  - Trout move in and stay
  - Survive better first year
- Does stocking reduce CC for wild trout?
  - Modest effects on growth and none on survival
  - Comprehensive study in ID detected no effects
  - Hybridization and disease are common

- Do nonnative trout ruin the neighborhood for natives?
  - Removal increased native trout 10 times
  - Brook trout pack in more tightly
    - Greater load on ecosystem; can reduce spiders and birds
- Can native trout populations rebound when fishing is reduced?
  - Slow-growing bull trout can
  - Reach new limits

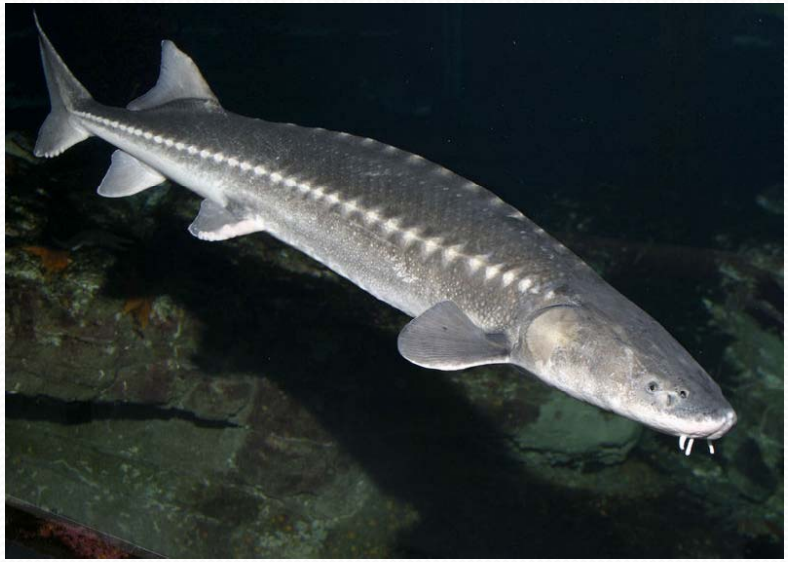
Kokanee

- Kokanee widely stocked, with widely fluctuating populations
  - Limited plankton food in unproductive reservoirs
  - Fluctuating flows kill eggs/fry, but increase growth
  - Manage for the middle (Goldilocks)

www.fishwithjd.com

Sturgeon

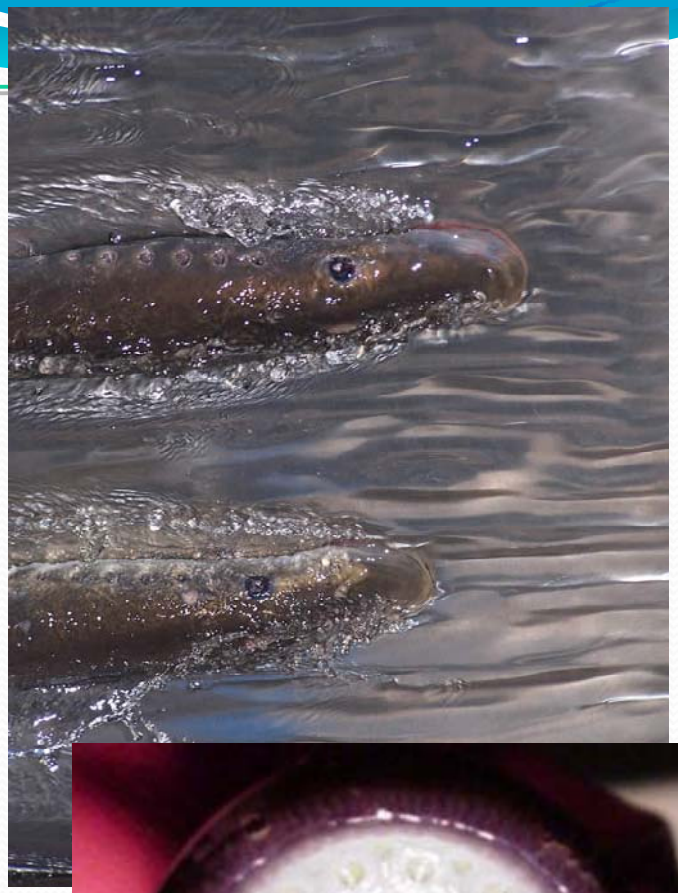
- Declined basin-wide, esp. above Bonneville
  - Low reproduction and juvenile survival
- Endangered Kootenai River population
  - Stocking for conservation
  - Lower growth and survival with more stocking
  - Lower temperature and fewer nutrients with Libby Dam
  - Realistic goals in “novel ecosystems”

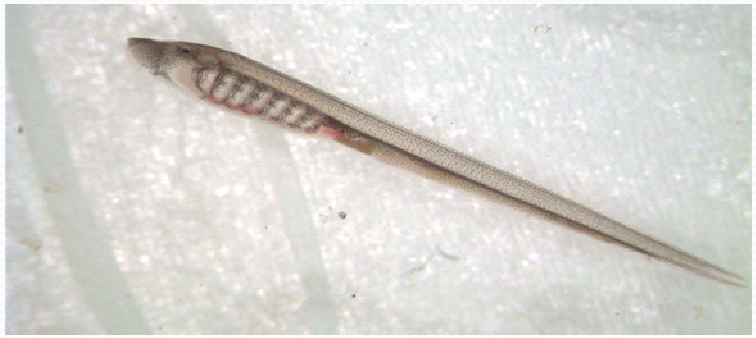


www.montereybayaquarium.com;
www.buffalopost.net

Lamprey

- Density has declined sharply in last 40 years
- Some hints that crowding affects repro/growth/survival
- Numbers rise/fall with host fish in ocean





Images courtesy A. Maule, L. Weiland

Recommendations Recap (All species)

- Understand why density dependence occurs in particular habitats and life stages of fish, such as limitations in spawning habitat, rearing habitat or food supply, or predator-prey interactions. This can help guide habitat restoration and population-recovery actions.
- Set biologically-based spawning escapement goals or harvest rates that sustain fisheries and also a resilient ecosystem & use goals as a reference points.

Recommendations Recap, cont'd (All species)

- Account for density effects when evaluating habitat restoration actions.
- Balance hatchery production with the Basin's capacity to support existing natural populations.
  - Anadromous salmonids
  - Trout
  - Sturgeon
  - Lamprey
- Consider density dependence findings & recommendations when implementing the Fish & Wildlife Program.

Questions?

"Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded."

Y. Berra 1998