

Stafford BAER Team Assessment - Fisheries Input (Wiseman)

Regulatory Environment

As a tributary to the South Fork Trinity River, Hayfork Creek has been designated as impaired by excess sediment/siltation and excess water temperature under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act by the State Water Resources Control Board. There is an EPA-approved sediment Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in place for the SFTR system and a TMDL in process for temperature.

All activities within the Riparian Reserve (RR) system of Hayfork Creek are subject to the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) Standards and Guides. The NWFP Record of Decision (ROD) and standards and guides were issued in 1994 which amended the existing Forest Plans of National Forests within the range of the Northern Spotted Owl, including the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

Southern Oregon Northern California Coastal (SONCC) coho salmon (*O. kisutch*) are not known to occur in Middle and Upper Hayfork Creek and only intermittently in Lower Hayfork Creek. The last documented coho salmon in Hayfork Creek was a juvenile that was found in Corral Creek, a tributary to Lower Hayfork Creek, in 2002. This area is approximately 23 river miles downstream of the Stafford Fire. SONCC coho salmon were listed under the ESA as threatened in 1998. All stream reaches accessible to anadromous fish within Hayfork Creek have therefore been designated as Critical Habitat (CH) for coho salmon by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. As such, all areas of Hayfork Creek within and adjacent to the Stafford Fire are considered unoccupied CH.

Fish Resources

The main stem of Upper and Middle Hayfork Creek, in the vicinity of the Stafford Fire, is known to support the following anadromous fish species; Klamath Mountain Province (KMP) steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Upper Klamath and Trinity River (UKTR) Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*) and Pacific Lamprey (*Lampetra tridentata*).

Klamath Mountain Province (KMP) Steelhead - Hayfork Creek

KMP steelhead is the dominant taxa found in Hayfork Creek and has the widest distribution. KMP steelhead is not listed under the ESA. The Forest Service has included KMP steelhead as a regionally sensitive fish species in Region 5. The Forest Service has also identified winter-run steelhead as the Management Indicator Species (MIS) to represent the anadromous recreational sport fish habitat assemblage. There is no formal distinction made for summer-, fall- and winter-run races of KMP steelhead by NOAA Fisheries and they are therefore grouped. Each run type displays unique life history strategies that are most strongly correlated to timing of freshwater entrance. Adult summer-run steelhead typically enter freshwater in March-April and “over-summer” in cold water refugia until spawning begins in the fall. Adult fall-run steelhead typically enter freshwater in late July-October and migrate upstream until spawning begins in January. Adult winter-run steelhead typically enter freshwater in December and migrate upstream until spawning begins in February. Juveniles of all run types utilize Hayfork Creek and all accessible tributaries for up to five years of freshwater residency before migrating to the ocean.

Summer-run steelhead populations in Hayfork Creek are thought to be depressed and near extirpation. Zero to twenty adult summer-run steelhead are typically documented downstream of Hayfork in Lower

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Hayfork Creek during annual summer fish surveys. These individuals may utilize Middle and Upper Hayfork Creek following fall rain events that promote favorable migration conditions.

Fall- and winter-run adult steelhead populations in Middle and Upper Hayfork Creek are thought to be healthy and robust. No population estimates are available for these fish as increased stream flow prevents safe and accurate survey efforts.

Upper Klamath Trinity River (UKTR) Chinook Salmon

The UKTR Chinook salmon population is composed of both fall- and spring-run types. Both types are found in Hayfork Creek but are primarily confined to Lower Hayfork Creek. Notable exceptions to this occur when early fall rains coincide with adult UKTR Chinook salmon migrations. This results in the dispersal of adult UKTR Chinook salmon throughout Middle Hayfork Creek and all accessible tributaries. UKTR Chinook salmon are not listed under the ESA. The Forest Service has included UKTR fall- and spring-run Chinook salmon as regionally sensitive fish species in Region 5. The Forest Service has also identified UKTR spring-run Chinook salmon as the Management Indicator Species (MIS) to represent the anadromous commercial fish habitat assemblage. There is no formal distinction made for fall- and spring-run races of UKTR Chinook by NOAA Fisheries and they are therefore grouped for Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) effects analysis and determinations when appropriate.

Pacific Lamprey – Hayfork Creek

Adult and juvenile Pacific Lamprey are known to occur in Lower, Middle and Upper Hayfork Creek. Very little information exists regarding their population status. Lamprey typically enters freshwater in April to begin their upstream spawning migration. Spawning is believed to occur from March-June. Juvenile lamprey rear up to seven years in freshwater before out-migrating to the ocean.