

Mr. Jack Allen
Fisheries Manager 2
Region 3

W.E. Jones

Report of Silver Salmon straying, Mitchell Creek Mendocino Co.

Six Silver Salmon were observed spawning in Mitchell Creek on February 4, 1963. All six fish had an upper caudal clip given them when they passed through either the Pudding creek or the South Fork of the Noyo River Stations. One of the six was a dorsal marked silver destined to return this 1962-63 season to Pudding creek. The Upper Caudal clip is given to all Silver Salmon and Steelhead that pass through the trapping facilities at either Pudding Creek or the South Fork of the Noyo River stations. This marking is done in an attempt to prevent re-counting of fish that drop back over the dam and re-climb the ladders.

Weather and brushy conditions did not blend in with an attempt to check Mitchell Creek completely. The extreme headwater area above one mile as well as the area from the state highway bridge 100 yards upstream was checked. All the fish were found in the area from the bridge to a point 100 yards upstream.

Mitchell Creek itself is approximately 1-1/2 miles long. It is found 4-1/4 air miles South of Pudding Creek. Mitchell Creek is the smallest of the five streams found within a 4 1/4 mile radius- of Pudding Creek. These five include Mill Creek and Virgin Creek to the North of Pudding Creek and the Noyo River, Hare Creek and Mitchell Creek to the South.

Possibilities

1. All Six Silver Salmon were strays from either Pudding Creek, The South Fork of the Noyo or both. (Stan Nye reported dorsal marked Silver Salmon were counted through the Noyo Base.)
2. The population density of spawning adults in Pudding Creek was reached and some of the fish dropped back down to the ocean to re-enter other drainages.
3. The long period of extremely low flow in Pudding Creek, no fish were trapped from Dec. 19, to Jan. 24., May have caused fish below the trapping facility to seek other drainages.

Conclusions

For unknown reasons mature Silver Salmon were observed to have dropped back down either Pudding Creek or the South Fork of the noyo stations, but presumably Pudding Creek, re-entered the ocean and selected another drainage in which to spawn.

Recommendations

1. Future study to check;
 - A. How closely this straying correlates with population density, and weather conditions.
 - B. How extensive is the straying.
2. Use different marks when clipping fish at pudding creek and the South Fork of the Noyo stations. (fish are presently marked with an upper caudal clip in an attempt to prevent re-counting of fish that drop back over the dam and re-climb the ladder.)

Weldon E. Jones