

Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit

The Idaho Cooperative Research Unit of the U.S. Geological Survey educates graduate students in wildlife and fisheries science and conducts research on the production, utilization, management, protection and restoration of fish and wildlife resources in Idaho, as well as on the habitat and ecosystems on which they depend. Unit scientists, in collaboration with state and federal managers, conduct field research addressing management questions, ecological processes and policy implications.

Accomplishments

The Idaho Cooperative Unit, which was established at the University of Idaho in 1947, is among the most productive in the nationwide program in terms of graduate education, research and contributions to resource management. For every dollar of funding it receives from U-Idaho and the state of Idaho, it generates \$40 in research. Over the past three years, the Idaho Cooperative Unit generated \$7.5 million in extramural research funding, granted 13 advanced degrees, directed 54 research projects and employed 20 graduate students and 20 postdoctoral researchers, research associates, technicians and administrative assistants.



Recent research projects and their applications include:

- Improving approaches for management of native cutthroat populations, which resulted in the establishment of blue ribbon catch-and-release fisheries for native cutthroat in many Idaho rivers - fisheries that attract thousands of anglers from around the country.
- Surveying survival rates of adult and juvenile salmon and steelhead during migration, prompting changes in the operation of hydrodams and improved fish passage efficiency and survival for migrating juvenile and adult fish.
- Prompting change in the management status of the mountain lion in Idaho from vermin to wild game, and subsequent increases in license sales.
- Developing decision-analysis tools for controlling New Zealand mud snails in fish hatcheries. Managers of commercial and agency hatcheries used results to reduce impacts of mud snails on hatchery fish and to develop guidelines for new state regulations regarding control of invasive species.
- Creating research, monitoring and evaluation of measures to recover the Snake River fall Chinook. The project identified habitat features that affect juvenile survival and successful downstream migration of threatened fall Chinook.
- Assessing the risks and benefits of barrier removal to native fish populations in Idaho. Researchers conducted a decision analysis to estimate risks from three invasive species (a

mollusk, a fish and a parasite) to native fish populations if culvert barriers were removed to improve gene flow and migration corridors.

- Developing a gap analysis for preservation of species and ecosystems to identify species at risk before they became endangered. This tool is used throughout the United States by state governments to develop Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plans and in dozens of other countries to conduct conservation assessments of their natural resources.

Consequences of Reduced Funding

The Idaho Cooperative Research Unit emphasizes research to help find solutions to problems affecting fish and wildlife resources of Idaho, the Pacific Northwest and the nation. Failure to maintain funding could damage Idaho by resulting in a reduction in the amount of the scientific data available to resource managers to inform decisions about how to manage Idaho's natural resources.

A reduction in the budget for the Cooperative Unit would result in a reduction in competitive grant dollars brought into University of Idaho, and consequently a reduction in the national and international reputation of the University of Idaho as a leader in fisheries and wildlife sciences.

Cooperative Unit personnel maintain close working and professional relationships with the University of Idaho faculty, Idaho Department of Fish and Game employees and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees. In addition to mentoring graduate students engaged in this research, Cooperative Unit personnel teach graduate-level courses, serve actively in the university community and participate in a variety of professional activities. A reduction in the unit's budget could result in a reduced number of graduate students and graduate courses at University of Idaho as well as the loss of research expertise available to assist state, tribal and federal agencies.

For more information, please contact:

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