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June 7, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch

SUBJECT: Using falconry to control avian predation in the Columbia River Basin

BACKGROUND:

Presenter: Blaine Parker from the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission and Alina Blankenship from [Sky Guardian](#)

Summary: Blaine and Alina will provide general background on how falconry works; various birds of prey used in falconry; details on this year's field efforts; and how falconry can be an effective avian predation management tool to provide greater protection for out-migrating juvenile anadromous fish.

Relevance: One of the Council's emerging priorities from the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program addresses "preserving program effectiveness" by supporting expanded management of predators.

Workplan: Fish and Wildlife Division preliminary work plan 2022; Program Implementation; H. Pursue implementation of 2014 Program and 2020 Program Addendum, including Council Program priorities.

Background: The sport of falconry uses birds of prey as hunting tools and was developed thousands of years ago in the Middle East and Central Asia. Today, modern falconers use a variety of falcons, hawks, and even eagles to hunt upland game birds, waterfowl, and a variety of mammals. Some

falconers also use their skills and birds to provide federally licensed abatement services for a variety of interests ranging from farms, public works departments, and municipalities besieged by nuisance birds that affect crops, spread disease from landfills and on public streets, threaten airport safety from bird/aircraft collisions, and damage private property.

Currently in the Columbia Basin, hazing of piscivorous waterbirds that prey on juvenile salmonids involves noisemakers, pyrotechnics, fencing, bird wires, propane cannons, and even lasers. However, in nearly all situations, such techniques invariably lead to acclimation and acceptance by avian predators, a resumption of the predation problem, and immense frustration by fish managers and others, unless such hazing is regularly enforced with lethal take. Lethal take is an extreme measure and requires the approval of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service after a lengthy review and permitting process, and in some cases may not be authorized.

Earlier this spring, the Yakama Nation (YN) contracted with professional falconers in a pilot project to work in concert with YN fisheries staff who supplemented the falconry effort with standard hazing techniques, particularly at night, to successfully delay nesting of the Miller Rocks gull colony by several weeks. Similarly, this year, the Army Corps of Engineers at The Dalles Dam contracted *Sky Guardian* to develop the efficacy of falconry as an innovative tool to reduce avian predation and enhance the static deterrents of bird wires, propane cannons, and boat-based hazing. The intent of falconry at the project is to develop an additional layer of protection against predation from gulls, double crested cormorants, herons, and other birds.

Using falconry as an innovative new technique to control avian predation in the Columbia River Basin is showing promise, utilizing the inherent relationship between falcons and their prey.

More Info:

- [Video](#) of bird abatement using falcons at winery
- [Article from Oregon Wine Press](#), titled *Deep dive into the vineyard's winged worker*, September 1, 2021