

FORT PECK CHINOOK SALMON

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Success of a Fort Peck Reservoir Chinook program is highly desired by the public due to the potential of catching large salmon. Consistency in egg collection and providing harvestable returns to anglers has been a difficult objective to meet, with only 3 good returns since 1983. Adjustments in stocking numbers, size at time of release, release strategies and management strategies have not improved returns to the creel or egg collection in the last 5 years. Chinook salmon were initially stocked into Fort Peck Reservoir in 1983. Until 1994, stocking relied solely on availability of eggs or fish from North and South Dakota. In 1994 and the seven subsequent years between 1994 and 2005, Montana had only three successful egg takes that produced more than 200,000 green eggs. Both unsuccessful egg collecting and shortfalls in rearing space throughout Montana's hatchery system may be resolved with completion of the new Fort Peck Hatchery. Fort Peck Hatchery will provide rearing space, close proximity to the reservoir, and options to raise larger sizes and numbers of Chinook, resulting in management and stocking alternatives that haven't been available to provide a stockable Chinook that will survive to adult size.