

Papenfus, M. and M. Weber. July 21, 2015. Willingness to Pay for Willamette Basin Spring Chinook and Winter Steelhead Recovery [oral]. Federal Salmon Caucus Meeting, Portland, OR.

Two of the primary goals of conducting economic valuation studies should be to improve the way in which communities frame choices regarding the allocation of scarce resources and to clarify the trade-offs between alternative outcomes. The challenge of quantifying public preferences is particularly relevant to salmon conservation efforts in the Pacific Northwest. Despite the deep cultural importance of salmon to the citizens of the Pacific Northwest, there is a remarkable lack of valid empirical economic studies quantifying this importance to the general public in the region. This is conspicuously true for the Willamette Basin, home to more than half of the state of Oregon's human population and to the few remaining spring-run Chinook salmon populations in the state. There are many competing uses for Oregon's waters and decision-makers are often faced with trade-offs on how to allocate resources to accommodate these uses. Many of these uses conflict with salmon preservation and to date there is not adequate information to quantify societal values for salmon conservation. We have developed a stated preference nonmarket valuation study to estimate the general Oregon population's preferences and values to protect and restore Chinook salmon and winter steelhead populations in the Willamette Basin. Valid estimates of the public value for salmon will be useful in numerous policy contexts and will support numerous government agencies and community organizations to factor the value of salmon preservation benefits into their strategic policy and financial decisions.