

The Fishery Foundation conducted a three year study using FRH fish to assess the benefits of the net pen release program. In this study, groups of coded wire tagged fish were released directly from the transport truck or from the net pens. Recovery of the tags in the ocean fisheries and the spawning surveys would then be used to determine if the net pen released fish survived at a higher rate (as shown by recoveries of the tagged fish in the fisheries and in the streams) than those released from the truck. The overall result is that net pen released salmon were caught in the ocean at a rate of roughly 2.5 times (range of 2.4 to 2.6) that of fish released directly from the trucks to the estuary (Table 3) This effect was confirmed in freshwater where the ratio of recoveries was also 2.5. Interestingly, more than 95 percent of the fish escaping the fisheries returned to the Feather River or the Feather River Hatchery, with a few straying to the Nimbus and Mokelumne River facilities

Table 3. Comparison of recoveries of tagged FRH juvenile Chinook salmon released from net pens and transport trucks, 1994-1996. (From Brown et al., 2004)

<i>Release Year¹</i>	<i>Numbers Released</i>		<i>Ocean Recoveries*</i>	
	<i>Control</i>	<i>Experimental</i>	<i>Control</i>	<i>Experimental</i>
1994	149,554	149,002	1057	2565
1995	139,443	147,816	716	1878
1996	149,440	150,089	1077	2595

*Recoveries through year 4 of the cohorts in ocean fisheries off CA, OR and WA.

(Brown, R.L. 2006. The First 50 Years of Chinook Culture with a note on steelhead. Draft report prepared for the Water Forum, 660 J Street, Suite 260, Sacramento, CA 95814)

¹Adapted from DFG memo to Randall Brown dated 2/14/00.