

Automated Fish Marking – Using The AutoFish System in Oregon

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In 2003 the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) purchased one Northwest Marine Technology AutoFish System using Pacific Salmon Recovery Funds with an additional two Systems scheduled for delivery in the spring of 2004. The AutoFish SCT5 (formerly MaTS), which sorts, fin marks and Coded-Wire tags salmonids ranging from 57mm to 142 mm, is contained in a 32' trailer and can be operated at most hatchery sites and other fish rearing facilities. The SCT5 is comprised of one sorter and five marking lines capable of adipose fin excision and/or Coded-Wire tagging without the use of anesthetics. The unit was operated at two ODFW fish hatcheries for a sixteen week period from April through July of 2003. ODFW technicians operated the SCT5 in two daily shifts for up to seven hours per shift and processed over 2.5 million fish. Initial Coded-Wire Tag retention rates are good usually between 98 and 100 percent. Similarly, fin mark quality is high ranging from 97 to 100 percent.

ODFW will continue to utilize AutoFish units to implement its fish marking and tagging projects in the Columbia River Basin. The technology provides an efficient operation alternative to conventional manual fish marking methods when recruitment or availability of temporary laborers is limited.