

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group
Meeting #1 Summary
Thursday, February 17, 2022
Time: 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Attendees

Name	Affiliation
<i>Advisory Group Members</i>	
Robert “Bob” Kratzer	WA State Guides Association
Caleb Hitzfield	Caleb Hitzfield Fly Fishing
Geoff McMichael	Mainstem Fish Research, LLC
Jason Rolfe	The Flyfish Journal
Jessica Helsley	Wild Salmon Center
Jonathan Stumpf	Trout Unlimited
Lee Geist	Private angler
Luke Probasco	Private angler
Mara Zimmerman	Coast Salmon Partnership
Rich Simms	Wild Steelhead Coalition
Roy Morris	Retired fishing guide
<i>Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Staff</i>	
Toby Harrison	WDFW
James Losse	WDFW
Eryn Couch	WDFW
Kelly Cunningham	WDFW, Chair
Nichole Kloepfer	WDFW
<i>Facilitation Team</i>	
Greer Maier	Triangle Associates, Facilitator
Olivia Smith	Triangle Associates, Facilitation Support

Welcome and Introductions

James Losse, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) welcomed meeting attendees and explained the purpose of the meeting which is to launch the WDFW Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group. The facilitator, Greer Maier with Triangle Associates (Triangle) introduced herself and Olivia Smith, also with Triangle Associates, as the facilitation team for the Advisory Group. Greer then reviewed the meeting agenda and led a round of introductions of the Advisory Group members and WDFW staff.

Advisory Group members shared their name, affiliation, and interest in participating in this group. Several members shared a desire to see improvement for wild steelhead stocks and need for a robust recovery plan. One member, Chris Ringlee could not make this meeting, but the Facilitator reiterated that the goal will be to get 100% attendance of advisory group members moving forward.

Coastal Steelhead Proviso Project Overview

James Losse gave an overview of the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Project. In 2021, WDFW formed the Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group to inform the development of a plan to protect native and hatchery-produced steelhead for major river systems of Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, and coastal Olympic Peninsula, as required by the Washington Legislature in the 2021-23 budget. The Ad-hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group will provide input on the development of a long-term management strategy for coastal steelhead. The Department will submit the ensuing plan to the Legislature by the end of 2022. James introduced Toby Harrison, WDFW, as the lead for development of the plan. This long-term management strategy will work to meet the goals of the existing statewide steelhead management plan while setting new policy goals. James then presented on current coastal steelhead abundance and management ([slides 3-11](#)).

Questions and Discussion:

- A clarification was made that integrated hatcheries, those that genetically integrate with natural populations, use broodstock programs that integrate wild fish. Segregated hatcheries are referring to those use broodstock that is genetically segregated from natural populations and do not use wild fish.
- Caleb Hitzfield commented that the hatchery steelhead harvest rate graph ([slide 8](#)) is misleading because harvest rates have increased and returns have been lower generally. James acknowledged the graph can be difficult to interpret.
- In response to a question about whether the harvest data includes mortalities related to catch and release, James responded that he would like to go into more depth in a future meeting on sport harvest data but it is included in estimates.
- Rich Simms commented the hatchery steelhead harvest rate graph ([slide 8](#)) is important in understanding the relationship between increased fisheries, human population, and harvest and the decrease in wild steelhead stocks.

Advisory Group Process

Kelly Cunningham, WDFW Commissioner, gave an orientation to the WDFW Advisory Committee process and explained the role, ground rules, and expectations of the Advisory Group ([slides 13-17](#)).

Questions and Discussion:

- Roy Morris requested recording these meetings so that members of the public who could not attend can listen later.

- In response to a question about the possibility of in-person meetings, Kelly Cunningham responded the Department will follow state guidelines and if indoor mask requirements are lifted they could potentially meet in person with a hybrid approach.
- In response to a question about how Advisory Group feedback will be integrated and referenced (e.g. [IAP2 Spectrum](#)), the facilitator responded that the spectrum was shared to show the potential range of participation in a process like this and to clearly delineate where the Advisory Group is on the spectrum based on their role in the process. The Advisory Group is not the decision maker but is being asked by WDFW to collaborate and be involved in the plan development and to help inform decisions.

The facilitator shared a draft [Charter](#) for the group to consider and called out the section on group process. The facilitation team is recommending the Advisory Group use a consensus-based approach. If consensus cannot be reached, differences in opinion will need to be clearly documented for WDFW.

Coastal Steelhead Proviso Development

Toby Harrison, WDFW, reviewed the approach to the coastal steelhead fishery plans and timeline. There will be a background section that encompasses the cultural, economic, historical, and scientific perspectives to steelhead management. Toby explained there will be one overall framework that can be applied to each of the river systems of Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and the coastal Olympic Peninsula. Toby then gave an overview on the management framework including fisheries modeling, regulation, hatchery release scaling, socioeconomic and habitat, communications, geography. Lastly she provided the timeline and showed the [outline](#) she has developed ([slides 18-33](#)).

Questions:

- Jonathan Stumpf noted the timeline appears accelerated and asked about the amount of work that could be done outside of the Advisory Group meetings to make the meetings a productive use of time. Toby shared that the hope is for Advisory Group members to review materials and come to the meetings prepared.
- Jason Rolfe expressed an interest in learning more about the different sides of management and how each are weighted in terms of prioritization.
- Bob Kratzer requested a breakdown of trends from the last 10, 20, and 30 years and shared a desire to look at creel data from the 1980s, 1990's 2000's in terms of angler participation and guide licenses.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The Facilitator thanked the Advisory Group members for their engagement and thoughtful

questions. Next steps and action items were as follows:

<i>Action Items</i>	<i>Who</i>
Draft a meeting summary and schedule March meeting.	Triangle Associates (Triangle)
Review Draft Charter and Ground Rules and provide tracked changes or comment bubbles including your name/affiliation.	Advisory Members
Review the Coastal Steelhead Management Outline and Timeline document and come to the next meeting with questions and comments on the document structure and general content. Please provide tracked changes or comment bubbles including your name/affiliation.	Advisory Members

Public Comments:

- Hope that WDFW will consider reducing hatchery releases in the future and consider impacts to wild brood stocks. May help spread out the effort, not get such a concentrated. How public and advisory group interact
- ODFW has had a successful wild brood stock program since 1996, in fact wild steelhead populations have been higher than watersheds without out these programs.
- Looking at Steelhead abundance over a 35-year timeline I believe it is disingenuous to compare pre-hatchery segregation abundance. Another note concerning intra-year comparisons on spawning escapements keep mind the conditions between years digests it’s difficult to compare abundance between years. No doubt angler’s success has increased but overall effort Ave anglers has clearly decreased due to limited opportunities. This idea that anglers are more successful during times of perceived lower abundance suggests the number of steelhead is being grossly underestimated, ne more note; comparing hatchery harvest rates at terminal fisheries to wild fisheries that happen throughout the river. Wild Steelhead angler mortalities for other agencies such as ODFW are assigned at a rate of 3.7% knowing that is likely erroring on the e high side. 10% is gross over estimate of angler impacts on wild Steelhead.
- Brood stock programs did not work well on the Chehalis River and it seems early to be talking about this. This process is driven by a legislative funded proviso forcing an accelerated process in a very complex region and runs the risk of not delivering a real long-term plan for the state/region. The decline of species on the OP has been going on for a long time and won’t be turned around in a 10-month period. Time is not adequate, want to get to point to tell legislation instead of \$10k you need \$30M to bring fish back to bring benefits for tribes, anglers, and people who don’t fish. Like this group and dept. to be committed beyond December.
- Integrated, can you touch on segregated goals? The 50-100 people that visit each hatchery intake daily on the Bogachiel and Calawah would probably have to do with it.

The meeting officially adjourned at 5:10 p.m. PST.