

Joint-State Columbia River Fishery Policy Review Committee
Draft Language for Policy Provisions for Thermal Refugia, Fishery Monitoring, SAFE Production Goals, and New SAFE Area Exploration

November 20, 2019

Thermal Angling Sanctuaries

The Commissions recognize that summer and fall water temperatures in the Columbia River can reach levels that adversely affect the health and survival of migrating adult steelhead and salmon. Certain tributaries may provide substantially cooler water than the mainstem near their confluences. Research has demonstrated that migrating summer steelhead (hatchery and wild) use these differentially colder water areas under such conditions. Seasonal recreational fisheries closures in these areas may provide additional protections during these seasonally vulnerable times. A policy level joint-State body is to be convened to review available information regarding cold water use by ESA-listed stocks and the impacts of fisheries in these areas, develop a report that describes the needs and benefits of possible Thermal (Cold Water) Angling Sanctuaries, and make recommendations on possible boundaries and regulations for protecting steelhead and salmon residing therein. The report is to be submitted to each Commission for their consideration and if warranted, adoption of concurrent regulations.

Scientific Monitoring

In recognition that the scientific monitoring of fisheries, spawning escapements, and other measures of stock status is necessary to execute the provisions of this Policy and achieve its purpose, the Commissions commit to seeking the funding necessary, and prioritizing funds available, to monitor the stock status of Columbia River salmon and steelhead populations. Further, the Departments shall seek to conduct scientific studies of catch and release mortality where significant uncertainty exists in current estimates in either commercial or recreational fisheries, if funding is available.

SAFE Production Goals

The following is for insertion into the General Provisions section on Hatchery and Natural Production Goals.

The current hatchery production goals for release in Select Area fisheries are as follows.

- Spring Chinook: 3.7 M smolts
- Fall Chinook: 1.0 M smolts
- Coho: 5.255 M smolts

Select Area fisheries

The Commissions recognize that the economic benefits associated with off-channel commercial fisheries is a fundamental component of a successful Columbia River salmon fishery policy. To date, enhancements have included providing additional hatchery fish for release in these off-channel areas and expansion of winter and summer seasons in off-channel areas. These actions are intended to continue, and additional actions may be undertaken, such as increasing the

production of hatchery salmon in off channel areas and further evaluation or implementation of additional off-channel sites, particularly in Washington State.

In addition to the above new language that the PRC is scheduled to consider, the staff has reviewed further the policy language moved forward at the October 1, 2019 meeting on Development and Implementation of Alternative Commercial Fishing Gear, and offers the following edits to that language, with original language intended for deletion shown in strike-through font and replacement language shown in italicized font. The edited language below has been included in the full draft policy document, provided under agenda item 4.a.

1. Development and Implementation of Alternative Commercial Fishing Gear. The Commissions are committed to the goal that commercial fishing gear being used on the mainstem Columbia River optimize conservation and economic benefits. The Departments shall pursue the development and, as appropriate, implementation of commercial fishing gear alternatives to the gears currently authorized in non-treaty mainstem commercial fisheries. This should be done in a manner that seeks to improve on the catches of target species and stocks in comparison to the mortality of non-target species and stocks, in an economically efficient manner across the commercial fishery infrastructure segments. The development and implementation process shall include the following actions.
 - a. The Departments shall ~~complete~~ *finalize* a report ~~on~~ that will include results of evaluations of current and tested commercial gear types, including catches, mortality, and economic measures ~~and a report that contains an area-by-area cataloguing of the areas below Bonneville Dam showing which commercial gear type would provide the highest degree of selectivity in each area.~~ *The report should include a description of the geographic areas below Bonneville Dam where gears have been tested and/or implemented, and any pertinent information regarding the use of particular gear types in specific areas.* This report shall be a joint-staff effort and provided to both Commissions within one year of adoption of this Policy.
 - b. The Departments will ~~dedicate personnel to~~ work with representatives of the commercial and recreational fishing industries to develop recommendations on the development and implementation of commercial fishing gear that will increase the selectivity potential of commercial fisheries compared to current capabilities, *and/or promote state conservation objectives (i.e. controlling hatchery fish on spawning grounds).* Important objectives of this effort include gaining broad support from the commercial fishing industry, encouraging creative innovation from the commercial fishing industry, and complimenting the economic potential and stability of the commercial fishery while minimizing impacts to mainstem and tributary recreational fisheries. The Departments shall ~~pursue~~ consider options that provide economic and other incentives for participants ~~that~~ to become involved in alternative gear fisheries.

- c. The Departments shall seek funding, *if appropriate, to support efforts to develop and implement alternative gears*, and work with partners as appropriate to experiment with alternative gear, conduct any necessary studies (in such areas as release mortality, stock compositions, and economic viability), and otherwise facilitate the development of options for alternative gear use. Assessment of alternative gear types in comparison to current gear should include at least catch rates, release mortality rates and overall mortality effects on relevant stocks, economic value, and effect on the commercial fishery infrastructure as a whole. It should also be informed by perspectives from commercial and recreational fisheries.

The Departments shall ~~provide reports to~~ *update* their respective Commissions annually ~~detailing~~ *on* progress on the above policy actions. Both Commissions will need to authorize any successful alternative commercial fishing gears in a manner that achieves concurrent regulations.