



# **NEWS RELEASE**

**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**  
Eastern Region – 2315 N. Discovery Place, Spokane Valley, WA 99216

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## **Tucannon River steelhead management to be discussed at May 29 meeting in Dayton**

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) fish managers will present information and take public input on proposed Tucannon River steelhead management changes at a meeting in Dayton on May 29.

The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. in the multipurpose room of the Dayton Elementary School at Park and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets in Dayton.

WDFW southeast district fish biologist Glen Mendel explained there will be restrictions to the steelhead fishery for fall and winter 2013-14 to comply with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) requirements to protect wild steelhead that are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act as threatened.

“We’ve already made several changes in Tucannon steelhead hatchery production and management to protect this small wild steelhead population,” Mendel said, “but we can’t maintain the current fishery structure. We don’t want to close this fishery altogether so we’re trying to craft fishing rule options that help remove hatchery steelhead while still protecting wild steelhead.”

Mendel and other WDFW staff will present summaries of the Tucannon River steelhead harvest, natural population estimates, and management issues involved, and take comments on several options for a restricted fishery. All options include a hatchery steelhead retention requirement to reduce hatchery fish on the spawning grounds.

Options being considered to focus on removal of hatchery steelhead while minimizing catch-and-release and incidental mortality of wild steelhead, include:

- Option 1- Allow steelhead fishing Aug.1 – Dec. 31 when 40-50 percent of the hatchery fish and only 20 percent of the wild steelhead are present. The river would be closed to fishing Jan. 1 – June 7 (when trout fishing opens).
- Option 2- Allow steelhead fishing Aug. 1 or Sept.1 through Feb. 28 when 55-62 percent of the hatchery fish have entered the Tucannon River and when only 36 percent of the wild steelhead are present. The river would be closed to fishing March 1 – June 7 (when trout fishing opens).

Those who cannot attend the May 29 meeting in Dayton can look for information after May 24 about other possible options at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regions/region1/> and provide input by June 7 to [teamspokane@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:teamspokane@dfw.wa.gov) with a “Tucannon River” subject line.

# Tucannon Steelhead Management

5/24/13

## Goals

1. **Conserve/ Restore the natural origin (wild) population – overriding priority** (as per WDFW Commission & agency policies, Governor's Salmon Recovery Strategy (1999), local Endangered Species Act (ESA) recovery plan (SRSRP) & ESA permits, L. Snake R. Comp. Plan (LSRCP), & fishery co-manager goals)
2. **Maintain steelhead fisheries**
  - Meet mitigation goals/maintain social/cultural/economic benefits (WDFW Policy, LSRCP agreement, fishery co-manager goals, SRSRP)
3. **Tucannon Steelhead Population Goals**
  - Minimum average annual overall goals are:
    - **1,000 wild steelhead** for ESA recovery (SRSRP & National Marine Fisheries Service= NMFS)
    - **875 hatchery steelhead** for mitigation/harvest (LSRCP & ESA permit Hatchery Plan, SRSRP)
  - **Critical level of ~ 280-295 wild** needed to maintain steelhead fishing (ESA permit for fisheries).

## Constraints/Issues

1. **Bypass of Tucannon River:** > 50% of Tucannon bound steelhead are **NOT** entering the Tucannon R. and are crossing L. Granite Dam. These fish don't contribute to conservation or fishery goals in the Tucannon River. **As long as bypass continues at this rate, full achievement of ANY of the management Goals is unlikely.**
2. **Fishery Permit Requirements** (ESA permit)
  - A minimum average of 280-295 returning **WILD** steelhead are required to meet the critical level set by the ESA fishery permit (28-45 minimum needed for hatchery broodstock)
  - If critical threshold is not met, the ESA fishery permit **may require closure or restriction of the steelhead fishery, regardless of the # of clipped hatchery steelhead available.**
3. **Wild Steelhead Prediction & Monitoring**
  - A distinct Tucannon wild steelhead population is confirmed by genetic studies & **formally designated** by a multi-agency technical review team (ICTRT), NMFS, WDFW, & co-managers
  - Under ESA & WDFW policy, wild Tucannon steelhead must be conserved & monitored
  - WDFW now uses PIT tag returns/detections at Columbia and Snake River dams & in the Tucannon R to estimate wild adult returns from smolt production.
  - Current data do not indicate that the average return to the Tucannon R is meeting the critical threshold level. **The most recent 5-year average WILD return is 176 steelhead to the Tucannon River (not including other Snake R tributaries).**

- Past monitoring does not account for returns in Snake R tributaries (e.g. Penawawa & Deadman Creeks) that are considered part of the Tucannon population
  - WDFW is now using traps to estimate the size of sub-populations.
- WDFW will conduct a new genetic study in 2013 to check Snake R tributary steelhead (SH) sub-populations and their relation to Tucannon steelhead, & distinctness of Tucannon SH.

#### **4. Hatchery changed to using wild (endemic) broodstock** (2010 last release of LFH stock);

- **Use of Lyons Ferry Hatchery (LFH) stock on the Tucannon is no longer justifiable or compatible with numerous policies and science-based assessments** (*from two outside science reviews of LFH steelhead program, the federal Hydro-system Biological Opinion, WDFW policy for hatchery/fishery reform, the WDFW Statewide Steelhead Mgmt Plan, & WDFW 21<sup>st</sup> Century Salmon implementation as reported to the legislature, US v OR & Columbia R Mgmt Plan; + WDFW genetic study*).
- WDFW was compelled to **change to the use of wild broodstock in the hatchery or terminate the Tucannon R steelhead hatchery program & fishery.**
- No adipose clipped (hatchery) steelhead adults of Tucannon River smolt releases are destined for the Tucannon River in 2013-14, due to the shift from LFH stock to wild stock & insufficient hatchery production of wild Tucannon stock (because of broodstock mining concerns, a marking agreement, & funding/space limitations).
- Currently, inadequate space is available at LFH to rear the full 150k program. Broodstock availability in 2013 is inadequate for full program, plus funding for LFH modifications to provide more space has been deferred (BPA funding cuts) – find alternate funding?
- Marking agreement under US v OR & HGMP – WDFW can't adipose clip hatchery smolts unless hatchery production is expected to reach at least 76k. At all production levels 50k would remain unmarked for conservation purposes; up to 100k marked at full program.
- The recent change from the LFH stock to Wallowa stock for use outside the Tucannon R allows grouping at LFH & provides space for up to ~100k Tucannon wild stock in 2013.

### **Steps to a Fishery Decision & Implementation**

1. **Explain the situation to NMFS and coordinate conceptually what is potentially acceptable under the ESA permit to maintain a fishery, or decide whether the fishery must close.**
2. **Hold a Public Meeting** in Dayton in May to discuss issues and obtain input on options.
3. **Continue to compile & update monitoring data** for wild Tucannon steelhead & the 2012 fishery (as a required annual report for the ESA fishery permit), **consider input from the public and NMFS and prepare a recommendation** for the fall 2013-14 fishery.
4. **Present the data compilation and recommendation to NMFS** during summer 2013 & implement the resultant fishery actions by Aug. 1, or Sept. 1, 2013.
5. **Continue to improve wild steelhead return monitoring & prediction capabilities. Expand the hatchery production & marking** for future Tucannon steelhead fisheries.