

"GREEN SHEET"

(Form Rev. 11/03)

Meeting/workshop: January 11-12, 2008
Agenda item: Columbia River Spring Chinook Allocation
Staff Contact: Cindy LeFleur
Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River Policy Coordinator, Intergovernmental Resource Management Program
Presenter/s: Bill Tweit, Policy Leader - Columbia River, Intergovernmental Resource Management Program

Background:

Columbia River spring Chinook are comprised of lower river stocks returning to Washington tributaries below Bonneville Dam and the Willamette River in Oregon, and upriver stocks destined for areas above Bonneville Dam. The upriver run includes hatchery and wild fish. Two components of the wild upriver run are listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Snake River spring/summer Chinook and Upper Columbia spring Chinook.

Historic non-Indian spring Chinook fisheries in the main-stem Columbia River occurred during February through May and harvested spring Chinook destined for every subbasin. Commercial seasons were structured to target Willamette and other lower river stocks during February-March and upriver stocks during May. Mid-March through late April was generally closed to commercial fishing to provide escapement during the peak of the run. Recreational seasons were open the entire year but prior to World War II most recreational fisheries were focused in the tributaries. Non-Indian fisheries targeting upriver spring Chinook largely ended in 1977, when the runs declined. The Parties to *U.S. v Oregon* developed a conservation-based fish management plan to protect, rebuild, and enhance upper Columbia River fish runs. During 1986-1995, fisheries operated under the Columbia River Fish Management Plan (CRFMP) that limited the non-Indian fisheries to less than 5% of the upriver run. Non-Indian Columbia River fisheries were directed at Willamette spring Chinook by timing of the fishery, with incidental impacts to upriver stocks.

With the advent of mass-marked hatchery fish, mark-selective fishing techniques, and agreements with the *U.S. v Oregon* Parties, additional selective fishing opportunities became available beginning in 2001. The states were able to implement mark-selective sport and commercial fisheries that allowed for very small catch and release incidental mortality (i.e. the level of unintended fisheries-related mortality) on the ESA-listed stocks while providing opportunity to harvest abundant hatchery fish. These fisheries have been operated under strict limits on the allowable level of incidental-mortality of ESA-listed salmon, and have been limited to 2% of the run. Both sport and commercial fisheries use mark-selective fishing techniques that require the release of all spring Chinook with an adipose fin intact. The *U.S. v Oregon* agreement for 2008-2017 will maintain similar opportunities for non-Indian fisheries. Fisheries in the Columbia River are jointly managed with the state of Oregon, requiring coordination in order to have concurrent regulations.

Previous Allocation Decisions

Until 2002, non-Indian sport and commercial catch of upriver spring Chinook had never been formally allocated, although *U.S. v Oregon* agreements limited seasons for sport and commercial fisheries which resulted in relatively balanced impacts to upriver spring Chinook. Because both fisheries are limited by the incidental mortality rate on ESA-listed spring Chinook,

the Departments of Washington and Oregon Fish and Wildlife asked the respective Commissions for a policy to share the conservation burden and allocate the impact rate to provide both fisheries with access to the harvestable hatchery spring Chinook. Three two-year policies guiding allocation of the ESA-limits to sport and commercial fisheries have been in place since 2002. The current policy (C-3615, attached), which expires December 31, 2007, includes Guiding Principles and Fisheries Management Objectives, which have changed very little over the past six years. The first allocation policy included a matrix where the allocation changed based on the abundance of spring Chinook. Within the matrix, the allocations ranged from 90% sport/10% commercial to 50% sport/50% commercial. The actual allocation of impacts to sport and commercial fisheries has changed very little ranging from 57% sport/43% commercial to 65% sport/35% commercial. The current allocation is 57% sport and 43% commercial.

Achieving these precise allocation proportions can be difficult because of variations in fishing effort and catch per unit effort and in spring Chinook run timing and run sizes. Moreover, management is complicated by the inability to accurately update the inseason run size until late April, after much of the prime fishing season has passed. Despite these challenges, inseason management has generally been effective at maintaining fisheries within or very close to limits on allowable incidental-mortality while optimizing harvest opportunity (Attachment 1). It is also important to note that the total non-Indian incidental mortality rate has averaged 1.6% during 2002-2007 compared to the 2% guideline.

In addition, diverse opportunities exist for spring Chinook fisheries. The sport fishery allocation includes mainstem Columbia River, mainstem Snake River, Ringold area and the Wanapum tribal fishery. The commercial fishery allocation includes mainstem, Select Areas and other miscellaneous fisheries (shad fishery). All of these fisheries are conducted under the total non-Indian impact rate of 2% and provide opportunities throughout the Columbia River basin to harvest hatchery spring Chinook.

Fishery Management

Spring Chinook fisheries have been re-initiated in the Columbia River in times and areas that were previously not available, providing increased opportunities for both fisheries. Both fisheries have increased in time and fishing areas. Angler trips have averaged 131,000 during 2002-2007. Commercial fisheries averaged about \$5.00/pound for spring Chinook during the same time period. Within the past six years, spring Chinook returns have averaged over 300,000 fish. Although the allowable impact rate does not satisfy the needs of all of the user groups, the sport fishery has harvested an average of 14,500 hatchery spring Chinook during this time frame and the commercial fishery has harvested an average of 7,200 hatchery spring Chinook (Attachment 1). This average harvest of nearly 22,000 hatchery spring Chinook in sport and commercial fisheries was accomplished with incidental impacts to the ESA-listed upriver components of less than 2% or an average of 600 fish. The ESA-listed run size has averaged 36,100 fish during this time frame.

Fishery management decisions must be conservative to ensure the ESA guidelines are not exceeded. Decisions regarding season length and catch expectations are built upon preseason forecasts of abundance and recent year catch rates. In-season management decisions are based on actual fishery catches and by monitoring dam counts to update the run sizes. Modifications to the preseason fishing schedules must often be made because of differences from the preseason expectations in catch rates, dam counts or environmental factors. Variations from preseason fishing plans can be very frustrating to the sport and commercial fishers.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

With the advent of the first policy regarding spring Chinook allocation, the Washington and Oregon Commissions have adopted guiding principles and management objectives, which include conservation goals and objectives for fishery management. Also included in the policy is an allocation of the incidental non-Indian ESA impacts between sport and commercial fisheries. All mainstem fisheries need some level of ESA impacts. There is no biological basis to determine the "best" allocation proportions between various sectors. The staff will propose a new policy that incorporates many of the components of the existing policy.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Staff met with the Columbia River Recreational and Commercial Advisor Groups on these issues in December. The Recreational group was interested in an allocation that would provide a season encompassing the month of April and the majority of the impacts to the sport fishery. They were not interested in a 10-year policy. The Commercial group preferred a 50/50 allocation of impacts and was supportive of a 10-year policy if the allocation was 50/50 +/- 5%. The Commercial group was interested in discussions between the two sectors on an annual basis to negotiate changes and find common ground, if applicable. A separate Stakeholder Group has been established by WDFW and ODFW with the goal of a collaborative process to discuss the future of sport and commercial fisheries and in particular, allocation of limited resources. A report on results of the December 20 and January 8 meetings will be presented at the January meeting.

Action requested (identify the specific Commission decisions you are seeking):

N/A. Briefing only. Staff will provide a recommendation at the February Commission meeting.

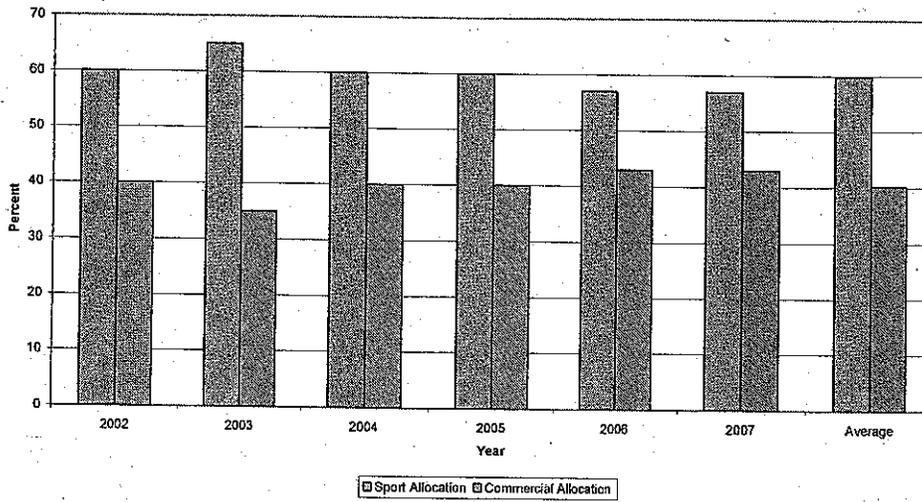
Draft motion language:

N/A.

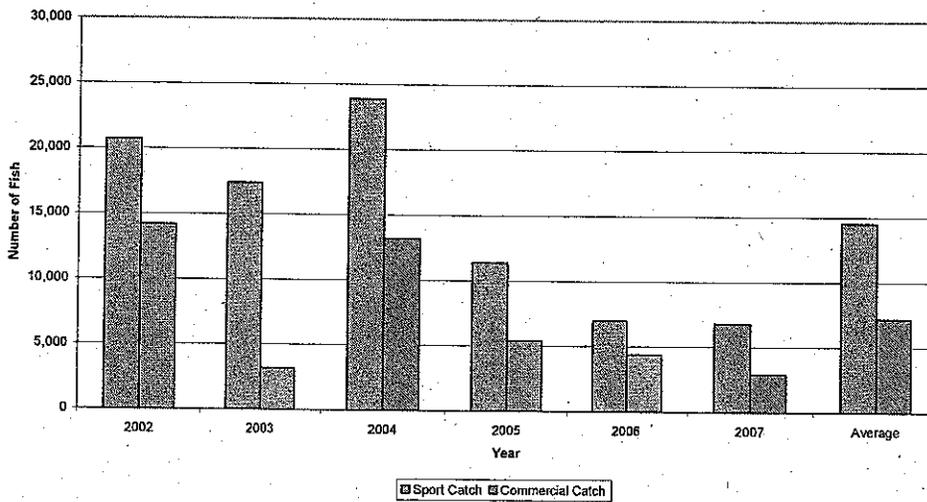
Justification for Commission action:

Briefing only.

Previous Allocations of ESA Impacts



Harvest of Hatchery Spring Chinook



Recent Lower Columbia River Mainstem Spring Chinook Catches		
Year	Sport	Commercial
2002	20,700	14,200
2003	17,400	3,200
2004	23,900	13,200
2005	11,400	5,400
2006	7,000	4,400
2007	6,800	2,900

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

POLICY DECISION

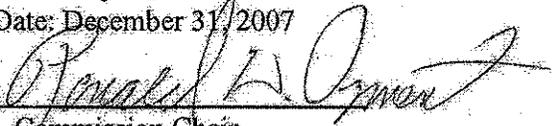
POLICY TITLE: Mainstem Columbia River **POLICY NUMBER:** C-3615
**Spring Chinook Management and Allocation for
Non-Indian Fisheries, 2006-2007**

Supersedes: C-3613 and C-3614

Effective Date: January 14, 2006

Termination Date: December 31, 2007

See Also:

Approved by: 
Commission Chair

Guiding Principles

- Meet conservation requirements for wild spring chinook and wild winter steelhead, including populations listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.
- Manage non-Indian harvest of spring chinook within the provisions of the *U.S. v Oregon* Management Agreement for upriver spring chinook.
- Manage harvest to meet hatchery escapement goals.
- Focus sport and commercial fisheries' allocation on harvest of hatchery fish by implementing live capture and release of unmarked spring chinook.

Fisheries Management Objectives

- Specific structure of sport and commercial fisheries will be set by the Columbia River Compact on an annual basis to meet adopted allocation policies and fisheries objectives after annual run size forecasts are available.
- Manage the mainstem Columbia River spring chinook fisheries with the intent to limit the wild winter steelhead impact to less than 2%.
- Provide for in-season management flexibility to utilize the non-Indian upriver spring chinook impact allocation to meet the objectives of both fisheries, i.e., upriver impact sharing adjustments in response to in-season information pertaining to catch and run size.
- Adjustments to the sport fishery may occur in-season if it is estimated the fishery will not continue through April. In-season adjustments may include such options as days/week and area closures.
- Recognize economic benefits of sport and commercial fisheries in the Columbia River.
- Provide for sport fisheries throughout the Columbia River downstream of McNary Dam, sport/tribal fisheries in the Snake River and upper Columbia River, and commercial and sport fisheries in select areas.

Allocation of Upriver Spring Chinook Impacts

The Director shall manage Columbia River non-Indian spring chinook fisheries that are covered by the allowable ESA upriver impact rate (currently 2%) based on the following allocation guidelines. The recreational fishery allocation should be 60% of the allowable impact rate with the remainder to the commercial fishery.

Delegation of Authority

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission delegates the authority to the Director, through the Columbia River Compact process, to set seasons for sport and commercial fisheries in the Columbia River, and to adopt permanent and emergency regulations to implement these fisheries.

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Meeting/workshop: January 11-12, 2008
Agenda item: Columbia River Summer Chinook Allocation
Staff Contact: Cindy LeFleur
Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River Policy Coordinator, Intergovernmental Resource Management Program
Presenter/s: Heather Bartlett, Fish Management Division Manager Anadromous, Fish Program

Background: Summer Chinook enter the Columbia River in June and July on their migration to the upper Columbia River basin, above Priest Rapids Dam. Historically, the majority of the spawning occurred in the upper Columbia River above Grand Coulee Dam and access to that area was blocked by the construction of the dam, which was completed in 1941. Since completion of the Columbia River hydropower system, summer Chinook redds are found in the Columbia, Wenatchee, Okanogan, Methow, Similkameen, Chelan and Entiat rivers.

Upper Columbia summer Chinook are not listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and are currently healthy. Population abundance has rebounded in recent years to levels that provide fish for harvest. Guidelines for managing fisheries and allocating harvest have not existed until very recently, since there has been virtually no harvest on summer chinook from the 1960's until numbers rebounded in 2000. An escapement goal and treaty/non-treaty harvest sharing were negotiated in the *U.S. v. Oregon* process, and were adopted for 2005-2007. The new *U.S. v Oregon* Management Agreement for 2008 and beyond, includes an escapement goal and harvest sharing schedule that is similar to the one adopted through 2007.

Previous Allocation Decisions

The current policy (C-3616, attached), which expires December 31, 2007, includes Guiding Principles, Fisheries Management Objectives, and an allocation of 50% sport/50% commercial for fisheries downstream from Priest Rapids Dam. Recreational harvest above Priest Rapids Dam was excluded from the allocation policy. The Commission had not provided guidance on allocation of the non-treaty share until 2006, for several reasons:

- Harvest opportunities were non-existent until 2000.
- Prior to 2004, the only harvest opportunity was recreational fisheries above Priest Rapids Dam.
- The non-treaty share below Priest Rapids Dam was not defined until late spring in 2005.

Management Guidelines

The *U.S. v Oregon* Management Agreement provides a spawning escapement goal for natural and hatchery stocks combined, and a sharing plan for the available harvest between treaty Indian and non-treaty fishers. The management intent is to treat the hatchery and natural fish as one composite group because the fish are genetically similar, and the escapement goal is a combined goal for both. The management period was established as June 16 through July 31 at Bonneville Dam.

On June 5, 2007, WDFW signed the "Agreement between the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on Jointly managed salmon and steelhead populations". This agreement provides guidelines for harvest sharing of salmon and steelhead stocks originating in areas above Wells Dam. The agreement limits all

non-treaty fishing on summer Chinook to minimal levels when the run size is below escapement needs. At levels of low allowable harvest (about 50,000 run size), harvest opportunity is allocated almost exclusively to upstream areas, to meet Colville and Wanapum needs as well as provide recreational fishing in the upstream areas which otherwise have quite limited salmon angling opportunities.

WDFW has also finalized the "Harvest Framework for Non-treaty Fisheries directed at Salmonids originating above Priest Rapids Dam" – a management plan that details management goals and harvest sharing for salmonids. The harvest measures for summer Chinook are compatible with the measures in the Colville Agreement.

Fisheries

Fisheries for summer Chinook have been re-initiated after several decades of closures. Fisheries in the upper Columbia (above Priest Rapids Dam) have occurred since 2000, but significant harvest did not begin until 2001 (Attachment 1). Below Priest Rapids Dam, sport fisheries reopened in 2002 with the majority of the catch and effort occurring below Bonneville Dam. Commercial fisheries did not begin in earnest until 2005. Sport harvest above Priest Rapids Dam has averaged 3,300 from 2001-2006. Below Bonneville Dam sport harvest has averaged 3,000 from 2005-2007 and commercial harvest has averaged 2,900 during the same time frame (Attachment 1).

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration: The staff will likely propose a new policy that incorporates many of the components of the existing policy.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Staff met with the Columbia River Recreational and Commercial Advisor Groups in December, but the discussion was focused on spring Chinook. A separate Stakeholder Group has been established by WDFW and ODFW with the goal of a collaborative process to discuss the future of sport and commercial fisheries and in particular, allocation of limited resources. A report on results of the December 20 and January 8 meetings will be presented at the January meeting.

Action requested (Identify the specific Commission decisions you are seeking):

N/A. Briefing only. Staff will provide a recommendation at the February Commission meeting.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

Briefing only.

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY DECISION

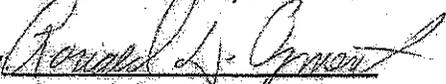
POLICY TITLE: Mainstem Columbia River Summer Chinook Allocation for Non-Indian Fisheries Below Priest Rapids Dam, 2006-2007
POLICY NUMBER: C-3616

Supercedes:

Effective Date: March 1, 2006

Termination Date: December 31, 2007

See Also:

Approved by 
Commission Chair

Guiding Principles

- Meet the conservation requirements for summer chinook, expressed as the escapement goal of 20,000 natural and hatchery spawners.
- Meet treaty/non-treaty sharing objectives in the 2005-2007 *U.S. v Oregon* Management Agreement.
- Address Colville and Wanapum tribal subsistence and ceremonial harvest needs.
- Provide recreational fishing opportunity above Priest Rapids Dam as the highest recreational fishery priority.

Fisheries Management Objectives

- Specific structure of sport and commercial fisheries will be set by the Columbia River Compact following stakeholder consultation in the North of Falcon process on an annual basis to meet adopted allocation policies and fisheries objectives after run size forecasts are available.
- Provide for in-season management flexibility to utilize the non-treaty summer chinook harvest to meet the objectives of both fisheries.
- In shaping fisheries, consult with stakeholders to recognize economic benefits of sport and commercial fisheries in the Columbia River.
- Provide for sport fisheries throughout the Columbia River downstream of Priest Rapids Dam and commercial fisheries below Bonneville Dam.

Recreational and Commercial Allocation of Upriver Summer Chinook Impacts

- The allocation of available harvest downstream of Priest Rapids Dam shall be 50% for the recreational fishery and 50% for the commercial fishery. The Commission recognizes that when allowable harvest is either very large or very small, adjustments may need to be made to the allocation based on the capabilities of each fleet.

Delegation of Authority

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission delegates the authority to the Director, through the Columbia River Compact and North of Falcon stakeholder consultation processes, to set seasons for sport and commercial fisheries in the Columbia River, and to adopt permanent and emergency regulations to implement these fisheries. The Director shall consult with the Commission Chair if it becomes necessary to deviate from the Commission's policy to achieve concurrent regulations with Oregon.

Attachment 2.

Summer Chinook Sport Harvest Above Priest Rapids Dam	
Year	Harvest
2001	800
2002	3,700
2003	3,200
2004	5,800
2005	2,300
2006	4,200

Summer Chinook Sport Harvest Below Priest Rapids Dam					
Year	Commercial	Below Bonneville Sport	Bonneville to Priest Rapids	Total Sport	Below Bonneville Angler Trips
2002	No season	1,503	111	1,614	54,839
2003	No season	2,007	328	2,335	46,943
2004	233	1,240	157	1,397	41,850
2005	2,574	1,622	136	1,758	38,505
2006	5,008	4,924	166	5,090	43,802
2007	1,100	2,500	82	2,582	23,732

Summer Chinook Commercial Harvest			
Year	Summer Chinook	Pounds	Price per pound ¹
2004	193 ²	2,948	\$1.69
2005	2,574 ²	46,537	\$2.15
2006	5,008 ²	97,929	\$2.53
2007	1,122	21,906	\$2.89

¹ Oregon only.

² Preliminary landings.