

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting dates:	February 1,2, 2008 Commission Meeting (Briefing)	#6
Agenda item:	Statewide Opening Day of Stream Fishing – Briefing	
Staff Contact:	Craig Burley, Jim Uehara, Pat Michael (Fish Program)	
Presenter(s):	Craig Burley, Inland and Marine Resources Division Manager (Fish Program)	

Background:

This presentation is in response to a Commission request to evaluate a change to the statewide opening day fishing season for streams from June 1 to the Saturday of Memorial Day Weekend unless there are scientific reasons not to do so.

In response to a 1983 Commission directive, a new fishery management strategy was developed to meet the conservation requirements of resident and anadromous trout populations in the stream habitats of the State of Washington. The findings of the “**Basic Fishery Management Strategy for Resident and Anadromous Trout in the Streams Habitats of the State of Washington**” (WDG 1984), recommended a late-May opening day for streams statewide to protect out-migrant steelhead and sea-run cutthroat trout juveniles, spawning steelhead, and protection of spawning resident trout and kelts (steelhead returning to the ocean after spawning).

Until 1986 westside streams opened to trout fishing the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend while eastside streams opened the third Sunday in April.

As a result of the 1984 WDG report, the 1986 and 1987 statewide opening day stream fishing seasons were modified to open the last Saturday in May, May 31 and May 30 respectively.

In 1988 the Washington Wildlife Commission adopted a WAC changing the statewide opening day for fishing in streams to June 1. This change was made based on analysis completed by department staff showing that from five to twenty percent of out migrating juvenile steelhead and cutthroat trout occurs from May 23 to May 31 and that resident trout spawning peaks similar to smolt migration (DeShazo memorandum 1988). This change also eliminated the need for double listing the opening dates in the two-year pamphlet simplifying the pamphlet.

The earliest day that a stream could be opened for fishing the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend is May 23, eight days earlier than the present June 1 date.

Since the adoption of the June 1 to October 31 statewide fishing season for streams in 1988, a number of salmon, steelhead and char species have been listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This conservation regulation is incorporated in permits issued by the Federal Government under Section 4(d) of the ESA that allow continued fishing for non-listed fish in areas where listed fish occur. In addition there are currently 32 streams with a later opening than June 1 providing additional protection.

Special rules have been adopted for streams where a more liberal fishing season than the statewide fishing season is appropriate. There are currently 18 streams with an earlier opening and 38 streams with a year-round season.

Department staff will be working with advisor groups and the public in 2008 to identify streams that could open on the Saturday prior to Memorial Day. Proposed changes would be part of next year’s minor sport fishing rule change cycle. Rules adopted by the Commission in February 2009 would be effective May 1, 2009.

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

N/A

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

A similar regulation proposal for the upper Columbia River underwent public review in the current regulation cycle. There is some interest in a broader application of this regulation.

Action requested:

None. Briefing only.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A