

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting dates:	March 7-8, 2008 Meeting (Policy Action)	#15
Agenda item:	Statewide Steelhead Management Plan – Policy Action	
Staff Contact:	Heather Bartlett, Salmon and Steelhead Division Manager (Fish Program)	
Presenter(s):	Heather Bartlett, Salmon and Steelhead Division Manager (Fish Program) and Amilee Wilson, ESA Response Unit Lead (Fish Program)	

Background:

In 2004, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (the Department) initiated a multi-step process to improve the management and status of steelhead in Washington. The first step in this process was to lay the scientific foundation for the subsequent development of improved management plans. Drawing on decades of research and new analyses, a comprehensive review of steelhead stocks and their status in Washington was published in a DRAFT report “*Oncorhynchus mykiss: Assessment of Washington State’s Anadromous Populations and Programs*” (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/papers/steelhead/index.htm>). Each chapter in the Science Paper concluded with numerous findings and recommendations to guide future management.

Building on the science foundation, this second step, development of a statewide steelhead management plan was initiated in July 2006 working with an ad hoc stakeholder group. The subsequent DRAFT document was released to general public review and input through the DRAFT Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DRAFT Statewide Steelhead Management Plan (SSMP) provides a framework of policies, strategies, and actions for application throughout the state in steelhead management. Recognizing that substantial variation exists in the status of stocks, habitat conditions, and that tribal, local, and federal authorities vary across the state the objective for the DRAFT Plan is to provide the Department with the necessary guidance to develop the third and final step; regionally based steelhead resource management plans. For many of these regions, recovery plans have been developed and will compliment the statewide steelhead plan to serve as primary guidance for detailed strategies and actions identified within the regional steelhead resource management plans.

The DEIS was released to the public for 41 days of comment on August 1, 2007. Public meetings occurred in Sequim (8/13), Olympia (8/14), Vancouver (8/15), Mill Creek (8/16), Wenatchee (8/20), Moses Lake (8/21) and Richland (8/22). On August 16th the comment period was extended for 11 days and closed on September 11th.

Seventy-seven people submitted approximately 260 written comments about the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan and the DEIS. These comments provided important feedback that has improved the DRAFT SSMP. The comments suggested approximately 29 modifications or additions that improved the plan.

Recognizing that substantial variation exists in the status of stocks, habitat conditions, and that tribal, local, and federal authorities vary across the state the objective for the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan is to provide the department with the necessary guidance to develop regional management plans for each of the 7 steelhead distinct population segments. ESA recovery plans have been developed for many of these regions and will serve as primary guidance for detailed strategies and actions identified within the regional management plans. Adoption of the plan by the commission will provide the department with policy direction to implement the plan.

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

The Statewide Steelhead Management Plan, which provides a framework of policies, strategies, and actions for application throughout the state for steelhead management.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Public involvement began in July 2006 with the formation of an ad hoc committee from the Steelhead and Cutthroat Policy Advisors (SCPAG). This ad hoc committee expanded to include other interested parties such as representatives of Wild Salmon Conservancy, the Hatchery Scientific Review Group, and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. The ad hoc committee met monthly to advise the department as staff developed the DRAFT Statewide Steelhead Management Plan (represents the preferred alternative in the EIS process). Members of the ad hoc committee shaped the components and chapters the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan through their recommendations at public meetings and in writing to address natural production, habitat, fishery management, artificial production, adaptive management, regulatory compliance, and outreach and education.

The DEIS received broad citizen review and input. Though the preferred alternative identified within the DEIS did not change in the FEIS, a number of public comments received during the public comment period were incorporated into the FEIS to strengthen the language that supported increased conservation and clarify the role of the SSMP in relation to long term management activities.

Action requested:

Request that the Commission consider formal adoption of the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan.

Draft motion language:

Move to adopt the following policies for management of steelhead statewide:

1) Restore and maintain the abundance, distribution, diversity, and long-term productivity of Washington's wild steelhead and their habitats to assure healthy stocks. In a manner consistent with this goal, the Department will seek to protect and restore steelhead to achieve cultural, economic, and ecosystem benefits for current and future residents of Washington State.

2) Natural Production - Steelhead management shall place the highest priority on the protection of wild steelhead stocks to maintain and restore stocks to healthy levels.

3) Habitat Protection and Restoration - Protect and restore the quality, quantity, and productivity of freshwater and marine habitat necessary to sustain and restore healthy steelhead stocks.

4) Fishery Management - Promote achievement of region-wide conservation and recovery goals through the protection and restoration of the diversity, spatial structure, abundance, and productivity of wild steelhead stocks through fisheries management. The Department shall implement a cooperative management approach for fishery resources subject to both state and tribal management, with the state and tribes exercising their respective authorities. Within the constraints of the natural production policy and tribal harvest-sharing obligations, the Department shall strive to provide diverse recreational fishing opportunities.

5) Artificial Production - Promote the achievement of the natural production policy and provide fishery-related benefits by implementing artificial production programs with the following characteristics: *Conservation Programs*. Artificial programs implemented with a

conservation objective shall have a net aggregate benefit to the diversity, spatial structure, productivity, and abundance of the target wild stock. *Harvest Programs.* Artificial production programs implemented to enhance harvest opportunities shall provide fishery benefits while allowing watershed specific goals for the diversity, spatial structure, productivity, and abundance of wild stocks to be met.

6) Regulatory Compliance: Improve compliance with state and federal regulations applicable to hatchery operations, habitat conservation, hydro operation, and fisheries.

7) Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management - Implement monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management to influence management decisions to protect the abundance, diversity and productivity of wild steelhead stocks and the habitats they rely on.

8) Research - Implement steelhead research to inform the agency and the Commission on critical steelhead management issues.

9) Outreach and Education - Implement outreach and education programs to ensure Washington's citizens value, support and have the information and opportunities necessary to participate in the restoration and protection of steelhead and their habitats.

Justification for Commission action:

N/A