

7. March 8, 2008 Commission Request
Recreational Fishing Gear Restriction—Columbia River

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GREEN SHEET

Meeting dates:	November 7-8, 2008
Agenda item:	March 8, 2008 Commission Request Recreational Fishing Gear Restriction—Columbia River
Staff Contact:	Bill Tweit, IRM— Columbia River/Distant Waters Policy Lead
Presenter(s):	Bill Tweit, IRM—Columbia River/Distant Waters Lead Steve Thiesfeld, Fish Program—Puget Sound Salmon Manager

Background:

Commissioner Perry requested that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) evaluate the possibility of barbless hook rules for sport fisheries to reduce hook and release impacts on listed species (Columbia River salmonids). Further, we were asked to determine whether hooking mortality could be reduced with implementation of selective gear restrictions for Columbia River sport fishers and to present a briefing to the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) on findings.

The Commission request was specific to Columbia River salmonids. Department staff members have presented information on statewide regulations in order to provide additional perspective on the request. The staff recommendation is that the Commission should consider this issue from a statewide perspective, while recognizing that concurrence from Oregon Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) will be required to make any changes effective in the Columbia system.

Summary of current Washington barbless hook rules and other selective fishery rules:

Marine areas, including Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor: Barbless hooks are required for all species, except for marine fish in the ocean, forage fish jig gear, and Willapa Bay after August 1. Salmon and trout handling rules apply as part of the selective fishery package.

Freshwater rules: Barbless hooks and handling rules are required for sturgeon fisheries. Selective gear package for quality trout fisheries includes single-point barbless hooks, no bait, knotless nets, and handling rules.

Barbless hooks are not presently required for selective fisheries for salmon or steelhead in Washington rivers, including the Buoy 10 fishery. Handling rules are in place for salmon, steelhead, and char selective fisheries.

In specific areas and times, barbless hooks and/or single-point hooks are required to reduce snagging of salmon and disorderly fisheries.

Summary of hooking mortality study results:

Recreational hook and release mortality has been addressed by numerous individual studies and reviews. Based on those studies and reviews, there is not definitive evidence that barbless hooks result in a lower release mortality than barbed hooks. Likewise, there is not definitive evidence that single-point hooks result in lower release mortality than multiple-point hooks (e.g. treble hooks). While some studies indicate that barbless or single-point hooks result in lower release mortality, other studies indicate higher release mortality or no difference. In general, less active forms of fishing (e.g. mooching or plunking) appear associated with higher release mortality rates than active forms of fishing (e.g. trolling or casting and retrieving). Higher release mortality rates are generally associated with hooking a fish in a critical location that causes significant bleeding, such as the gills, heart, tongue, or eyes. Fishing with bait and fishing passive methods are cited as the principle causes of hooking fish in these critical locations and as such, fishing with bait and fishing with passive methods are shown to have a higher release mortality rates than using flies or artificial lures. Most mortality occurs within 24 hours.

The lack of definitive evidence is not proof that there is no effect, as this is a very difficult topic to study. It may mean that if the use of barbless or single point hooks does lower mortality, but the resulting increased rate of survival is difficult to detect against the background of other variables and the relatively high survival rate from current hook and release techniques. The adoption of barbless, single-point hook requirements in ocean fisheries is based on a precautionary approach to fishery management and a widespread sense that decreased injury and quicker release times that are likely with barbless, single-point hooks may result in increased survival rates.

Toolbox of selective fishery techniques for further consideration:

- 1) Single-point hooks.
- 2) Barbless hooks.
- 3) Bait prohibition.
- 4) Require recovery boxes on charter and guide boats.
- 5) Knotless net requirements.
- 6) Handling Rule.

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

Adoption of precautionary principle approach to reduce recreational fishery impacts on fish stocks that require additional conservation protection. In the absence of definitive scientific evidence that implementation of single-point barbless hook rules and other selective fishery techniques will reduce hooking mortalities further, consider whether to adopt those rules as precautionary approach to address salmon recovery objectives.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Not applicable.

Action requested:

Not applicable.

Draft motion language:

Not applicable.

Justification for Commission action:

Not applicable.

COMMISSION REQUEST TO DEPARTMENT

(a.k.a. "blue sheet")

Title of Request: Recreational fishing gear restriction – Columbia River

Commissioner: Perry

Priority Level (put one check in each row):

Importance: High Medium Low

Urgency: High Medium Low

Date Requested: Mar. 8, 2008 **Date Assigned:** Mar. 11, 2008

Assigned To (Program/staff person): IRM, lead; with Fish Program

Requested Due Date: Late 2008 (Oct-Nov)

Knowledge or Action Being Requested (narrative). Describe what you want to know. Be specific.

Department to evaluate the possibility of barbless hook rules for sport fisheries to reduce hook & release impacts on listed species (Columbia River salmonids). Determine whether hooking mortality can be reduced with implementation of selective gear restrictions for Columbia River sport fishers. Present a briefing to the Commission on findings.

Output Requested (e.g., telephone call, memo, material from files, new report, presentation, other):

Presentation/briefing at Commission meeting.