

14. Columbia River Summer Chinook Allocation Policy

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| (Proposed new policy will be provided after December 1) | |

GREEN SHEET

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| Meeting dates: | December 12-13, 2008, Commission Meeting |
| Agenda item #14: | Columbia River Summer Chinook Allocation Policy |
| Staff Contact: | Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River Harvest and Hydro Management —Intergovernmental Resource Management |
| Presenter(s): | Guy Norman, Director—Director's Office-Region 5 Phil Anderson, Deputy Director—Policy—Director's Office |

Background:

Summer Chinook enter the Columbia River in June and July on their migration to the upper Columbia River basin, above Priest Rapids Dam. Since completion of the Columbia River hydropower system blocked their access to spawning areas upstream of Chief Joseph Dam, 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 1960s until numbers rebounded in 2000.

An escapement goal and treaty/non-treaty harvest sharing were adopted in the new *U.S. v Oregon* Management Agreement. The escapement goal of 29,000 fish provides for sufficient escapement to meet natural and hatchery goals above Priest Rapids Dam.

Management Plans/Guidelines

Conservation guidelines are included under the *U.S. v Oregon* Management Agreement, which provides for a biologically-based 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.

The "Agreement between the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) on Jointly managed salmon and steelhead populations" was signed in 2007. WDFW has also developed 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. These agreements/plans provide guidelines for harvest sharing of salmon and steelhead stocks originating in areas above Wells Dam, and provides for harvest opportunities above Priest Rapids Dam as the highest priority, especially when the abundance is at low levels (near 50,000). This ensures that sport fisheries in the upper Columbia have a chance to harvest salmon in an area where very few opportunities exist. It also ensures that Colville tribal needs will be met.

Previous Allocation Decisions

The previous policy, C-3618, (Attachment 1), which expires December 31, 2008, 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

Fisheries

Fisheries for summer Chinook have been re-initiated after several decades of closures, providing additional opportunity for sport and commercial fisheries. Fisheries in the upper Columbia (above Priest Rapids Dam) have occurred since 2000, but significant harvest did not begin until 2001. 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. During 2008, the sport fishery below Bonneville Dam harvested 2,100 Chinook and the commercial fishery harvested 1,400.

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

Allocation of the non-treaty harvest of summer Chinook to sport fisheries from the mouth upstream to Priest Rapids Dam and the commercial fishery from the mouth upstream to Bonneville Dam. The Columbia River Fish Working Group (CRFWG) has focused their attention on spring Chinook issues, and has recommended that the current summer Chinook allocation be continued into 2009. It is expected that the CRFWG will discuss summer Chinook fisheries in more detail during Phase 2 of the process beginning in 2009. The staff is recommending that the current policy on summer Chinook be continued through 2010.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Staff members will meet with the Columbia River Recreational and Commercial Advisor Groups on these issues in December.

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

The Commission will consider final adoption of an updated policy at its January 2009 meeting in Olympia.

Draft motion language:

I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the following policy guidance relative to the mainstem Columbia River summer Chinook fishery:

1. The Policy C-3618 titled "Mainstem Columbia River Summer Chinook Allocation for Non-Indian Fisheries Below Priest Rapids Dam" effective January 1, 2009 through December 31, ____ (?) as presented by Department staff.

Justification for Commission action:

Provides direction to the Director for summer Chinook allocation in order for the Columbia River Compact to make decisions regarding recreational and commercial fisheries.

Communications Plan:

A joint staff report will be distributed in January 2009 that discusses summer Chinook stock status, review of fisheries, and recommendations for future fisheries. The season structures will be discussed at the North of Falcon meetings. The Columbia River Advisory Groups will have two meetings focused on North of Falcon discussions.

Form revised 10/16/2008 - sdy

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY DECISION

**POLICY TITLE: Mainstem Columbia River
Summer Chinook Allocation for
Non-Indian Fisheries Below
Priest Rapids Dam, 2008**

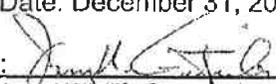
POLICY NUMBER: C-3618

Supersedes: C-3616

Effective Date: February 2, 2008

Termination Date: December 31, 2008

See Also:

Approved by:  , Chair
Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

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 work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to achieve implementation of this Commission action in a manner that results in concurrent regulations between the two states. 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.