

- 7. Columbia River Summer Chinook Policy

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“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting dates:	October 1-2, 2010, Commission Meeting
Agenda item # 7 :	Columbia River Summer Chinook Briefing
Staff Contact:	Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River Policy Coordinator, Director’s Office
Presenter(s):	Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River Policy Coordinator, Director’s Office Heather Bartlett, Hatcheries Division Manager, 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. 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 the most recent decade 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 Indian/non-treaty harvest sharing were adopted in the new *United States v Oregon Management Agreement*.

Management Plans/Guidelines

Conservation guidelines are included under the “2008-2017 *United States v Oregon Management Agreement for upriver Chinook, sockeye, steelhead, coho, and white sturgeon*” (MA), 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 “Agreement between the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) on jointly managed salmon and steelhead populations” was signed in 2007. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) 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.

Summer Chinook Summits

The Department participated in four meetings in 2009 focusing on summer Chinook which were called “Summer Chinook Summits”. The other participants included the Colville Tribe, Yakama Nation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission. The summits were convened following completion of the Hatchery Scientific Review Groups (HSRG) recommendations for summer Chinook. The purpose of the summits was to review the current management framework and to determine

the appropriate conservation, artificial production and harvest management objectives. The joint meetings covered a broad range of information, including the recent assessments by the HSRG, observations of adult returns, spawning levels and productivity estimates, harvest and exploitation rates for ocean and in-river fisheries, modeling of population response to increased hatchery production from the upcoming Chief Joseph Hatchery and other mitigation programs, population structure, and conservation objectives.

The results of the summits have been summarized in a report published early this year. Some of the key points from the summit are:

- Established population designations that were mutually agreed to.
- Recognition for the need to refine the existing non-treaty fishery management framework to address increased escapement needs for the Chief Joseph Hatchery and to ensure population specific objectives are achieved.
- Recommendations developed in the context of the framework would need to be vetted, and in most cases implemented, under other management authorities such as *United States v Oregon*, Pacific Salmon Treaty, or state, tribal and federal programs.

Since the Summit, the Department has taken the lead to develop refined natural escapement goals that reflect an aggregate goal for each watershed, with specific natural fish performance measures within the aggregate. The Department will coordinate with the appropriate co-managers on finalizing the escapement goals and run sizes that will form the basis for future management triggers relative to harvest methods and in-river sharing for both treaty Indian and non-treaty as well as upriver/downriver and gear type.

The Department will also initiate stakeholder and public meetings in the Columbia Basin to review the current and proposed escapement and fishery management objectives as well as seek input on timing and methods for implementation relative to the non-treaty fisheries.

Mark-Selective Fisheries (MSF)

MSF were implemented in the sport fisheries downstream of Priest Rapids Dam in 2010. Based on the preseason forecasts, additional fish from the Colville Tribe, and MSF regulations, these sport fisheries were able to occur for the entire season of June 16 through July. Above Priest Rapids Dam, anglers were able to keep only one wild fish in their daily bag limit of three fish. The Department will be meeting with constituents in eastern Washington to discuss increased MSF above Priest Rapids Dam.

Ocean Fisheries

The harvest of summer Chinook in ocean fisheries south of Canada count in the non-Indian share under the *United States v Oregon* agreement. Until recently, the parties considered the ocean harvest to be minimal. A recent analysis showed that this assumption may not be accurate. Based on that analysis, a review of the ocean model and the harvest of Columbia River summer Chinook in ocean fisheries is being conducted by technical teams under the purview of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). The initial analysis suggests that the harvest in ocean fisheries may be considerably greater than originally thought, which means that the harvestable numbers of summer Chinook for fisheries inside the Columbia River will be reduced. The review and recommendations is expected to be completed for the November PFMC meeting. This potentially new information may require further discussions with the *United States v Oregon* parties and Colville Tribe regarding harvest sharing and allocation.

Current Policy C-3618

The previous policy, C-3618, (Attachment 1), was extended through December 31, 2010, and included Guiding Principles, Fisheries Management Objectives, and an allocation of 50 percent

sport / 50 percent commercial for fisheries downstream from Priest Rapids Dam. Recreational harvest above Priest Rapids Dam was excluded from the allocation policy because the agreements with the Colville Tribe provide the majority of the harvest to areas above Priest Rapids Dam.

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

Staff members are recommending a new policy that will continue through 2013 (Attachment 2). The new policy incorporates the principles from the Summit and changes to the management framework, including extension of MSF. During the upcoming year, staff will share the results of the summits with the *United States v Oregon* parties, co-managers in Oregon, sport fishing groups in the upper Columbia, and sport and commercial advisor groups in the lower Columbia.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

There have not been any public meetings regarding the proposed policy. Staff members will meet with the advisor groups and copies of the greensheet and associated briefing materials will be provided. Staff members will meet with co-managers and constituent groups as outlined above.

Action requested:

Briefing only.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A

Communications Plan:

Results of commission decision will be shared with co-managers and appropriate constituents.

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

POLICY DECISION

**POLICY TITLE: Mainstem Columbia River
Summer Chinook Allocation
for Non-Indian Fisheries below
Priest Rapids Dam, 2009-10**

POLICY NUMBER: C-3618

Supersedes: C-3618, 2008

Effective Date: January 1, 2009

Termination Date: December 31, 2010*

See Also: C-3617

*Extension approved, March 13, 2010,



Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

***Discussion:** On March 13, 2010, the Fish and Wildlife Commission extended this policy through Dec. 31, 2010. This policy is the same as the previous two policies on summer Chinook. The recommendation of the Columbia River Fish Working Group (CRFWG) was to maintain this policy through 2013.

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 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 percent for the recreational fishery and 50 percent for the commercial fishery. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (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 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.