

## **“GREEN SHEET”**

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<b>Meeting dates:</b>	December 2, 2010, Commission Meeting
<b>Agenda item #3:</b>	Columbia River Alternative Gear Study – (Briefing)
<b>Staff Contact:</b>	Pat Frazier, Region 5 Fish Program Manager (Fish Program)
<b>Presenter(s):</b>	Pat Frazier, Region 5 Fish Program Manager (Fish Program) Sara Laborde, Special Assistant to the Director (Directors Office)

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### **Background:**

In their recent review of Columbia River hatchery programs the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) identified the need to increase the harvest of hatchery produced salmon. More recently the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (WFWC) adopted a Hatchery and Fishery Reform policy (C3619). As part of this policy the WFWC calls for development of alternative fishing gear to maximize catch of hatchery-origin fish with minimum mortality to native salmon and steelhead.

Achieving the goal of Commission POL-C3619 will require investigation and testing of alternative commercial fishing gears and methods for use in the lower Columbia River. Alternative commercial fishing gears under consideration have not been used in the Columbia River commercial fishery for over 50 years; therefore, there will be a learning curve to effectively utilize these alternative gears in the lower Columbia River. Some gears are used in commercial fisheries in other locations or in research studies, and this will provide knowledge that will help in developing alternative gears and methods for use in the Columbia River commercial fishery.

In order to implement alternative fishing gears and methods in lower Columbia River commercial fisheries it will be important to identify those gears that are most effective in capturing fish in a live condition. It will also be important that catch rates are adequate to support an economically viable commercial fishery. Additionally, it will be necessary to determine post-release survival rates for these gears prior to implementation in a full-fleet commercial fishery. Collection of this information will require some investigation and study to ensure that gears implemented can achieve the goals of increasing harvest of hatchery origin fish and minimizing mortality to native salmon and steelhead.

WDFW initiated this investigatory process by conducting a limited study in the fall of 2009. WDFW conducted cursory investigations of a variety of alternative gears and methods and based on the results of these investigations initiated a study using three gear types: 1) Purse Seine, 2) Beach Seine and 3) Trap Net.

Due to low funding levels available to implement this project 2009 was implemented as a pilot study to help guide future efforts. The scope of the 2009 Pilot Study was limited to three objectives, listed in order of emphasis:

- 1) Learn how to use the gear effectively and identify any modifications that can improve gears effectiveness
- 2) Evaluate and refine tagging protocols for use in future post release mortality studies
- 3) Assess relative catch species-specific catch per effort for each gear type

All three gears were fished in the lower Columbia River near Skamokawa Washington, with the Purse Seine and Beach Seine being fished near Welch Island at River Mile 34 and the Trap Net being fished near Jim Crow Sands at River Mile 32. All gears were initially fished for 11

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days during the late August through late September time frame. Operations of the Purse Seine and Trap Net occurred in August for a total of 6 and 4 additional days, respectively. The number of days fished totaled 11 for the Beach Seine, 15 for the Trap Net and 17 for the Purse Seine.

Catch rates varied for all three gears with the Purse Seine having the highest catch rate and the Trap Net having the lowest catch rate. Catch rates were likely impacted by fishers previous experience with the gear. The Purse Seine and crew that participated in this Pilot Study were the same that had participated in a similar study in the upper Columbia River during the spring/summer for 2008 and 2009 and the Beach Seine and crew had been fished in other fisheries. In contrast the trap net and crew was new to this gear and thereby had a larger learning curve to overcome during this Pilot Study. All three gears exhibited adequate promise to warrant additional testing. Fish captured were in excellent condition, regardless of gear type, with no immediate mortalities being observed. Modifications were noted for all three gears that would improve effectiveness in future tests.

The positive results from the 2009 Pilot Study now form a basis for continuing our attempts to develop alternative commercial fishing gears and methods for the lower Columbia River. For 2010 additional funds have been acquired to implement a full scale test. For 2010, WDFW is expanding the test to include multiple fishers in multiple locations in the Columbia River downstream of Bonneville Dam. The 2010 study will also be expanded to estimate species-specific short term mortality rates by gear type. The study will focus on capture of fall Chinook and coho during the August through October time frame. The objectives for the 2010 feasibility study are as follows:

- 1) Test deployment and operation of three different gear types (Purse Seine, Beach Seine and Trap Net)
- 2) Directly estimate short term (24-48 hours) species-specific mortality rates resulting from capture for each gear type
- 3) Directly estimate and compare species-specific catch per unit effort (CPUE) for each gear type

Participants in the 2010 feasibility test were selected through a competitive bid process. A total of 18 commercial fishers submitted bids to participate in this feasibility study and a total of 14 were selected; of which six fished beach seines, five fished purse seines and two fished trap nets during the fall of 2010. An additional pound type trap net will be fished during the fall of 2011. In the fall of 2010 gears were distributed geographically throughout the lower Columbia River with the beach seines operated between river miles 3-118, purse seines operated between river miles 23-131 and trap nets operated at river miles 3 and 30. All gears were fished for a 2½-month time frame from mid-August through late October. All 13 participants fished a total of 30 days.

The 2010 feasibility provided some very positive results with a total catch of 21,000 salmon and steelhead. Composition of the catch was comprised of 10,800 chinook, 8,100 coho and 2,100 steelhead. Both purse and beach seines appeared to be effective capture methods, with purse seines being the most effective of the two gear types. Catch of salmon and steelhead totaled 13,100 with purse seines and 7,900 with beach seines. The trap nets were generally ineffective with a total of 39 fish captured for the season, including 10 chinook, 26 coho and 3 steelhead.

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

N/A

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

Selection of participants occurred through the formal Request for Quotes and Qualifications (RFQQ) process. The process required that potential participants provide information that would allow WDFW to evaluate the proposals to determine the proposals that were best suited to conduct the study. Information provided with the proposal included area to be fished, gear to be fished, experience with gear to be fished and cost. Predetermined criteria were used to evaluate each proposal. This process resulted selection of participants that were well suited to conduct this study and provided us high quality data that will be valuable in evaluating the effectiveness of various gear types tested.

As part of the RFQQ process, informational meetings were held to assist interested commercial fishers in completing and submitting proposals to participate in this years study. In addition to providing information regarding the RFQQ process, these meetings also provided an opportunity to provide information regarding the study itself. While these meetings were contentious at times they did result in some positive interactions with commercial fishers that resulted in increased interest in this study. Based on responses from this years meeting, increased lead time between announcement of these meetings and dates the meetings occurred on would be recommended.

During the 2009 Pilot study news media and interested public were allowed access to the vessels participating in the study. While this was effective in providing information and educating the public regarding the purpose of the study and the gear being tested, it also negatively impacted the ability of participants to test the efficacy of these alternative gears in capturing salmon and steelhead. For the 2010 feasibility study, public access to vessels was limited to ensure that the primary objectives of the study (test deployment and operation of three different gear types and determine species specific catch rates) were achieved. Reduced access to fishing operations did allow WDFW to conduct fishing operations that better reflect commercial fishing operations, thereby providing better data to evaluate the effectiveness of these gears for use in a commercial fishery.

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**Action requested:**

None, briefing only

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**Draft motion language:**

N/A

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**Justification for Commission action:**

N/A

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**Communications Plan:**

Access to fishing operations and information provided to media representatives has resulted in several articles regarding the alternative gear study being produced. In general coverage of this study, and the associated concept of increase harvest of hatchery produced salmon and steelhead, was positive. WDFW staff will continue to provide information to public media to aid in the dissemination of information regarding efforts to implement alternative commercial

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fishing gears in the lower Columbia River.

WDFW have presented information regarding this study at meetings for several recreational fishing organizations. These presentations have generally been well received and have improved understanding regarding the purpose of this study. As the study continues WDFW staff will provide these recreational organizations additional information regarding study results and future study plans.

During the 2009 pilot study WDFW worked with a limited group of interested commercial fishers to promote the study and use of alternative commercial fishing gears and methods. Increasing participation via the 2010 feasibility study has increased support for the use of alternative commercial fishing gears and methods. WDFW staff will continue to implement this grassroots informational approach to increase support for the evaluation and use of alternative commercial fishing gears and methods in the lower Columbia River commercial fishery. As opportunities arise WDFW will work with commercial fishing organizations, such as Salmon for All and Columbia River Fisheries Protective Union, to promote the evaluation and use of alternative commercial fishing gears and methods.

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*Form revised 10/16/2008 – sdy*

## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS -- HOW TO PREPARE A GREEN SHEET:

This form is for staff-to-Commission communications and should be suitable for public distribution. You will succeed with this green sheet if you focus the attention on the actual Commission action you are requesting. Additional information that supports the green sheet summary should be included behind the green sheet in the Commission meeting notebooks.

The green sheet should represent your professional advice to the Commission to make a reasoned, considered decision. Give your professional judgment about the policy questions imbedded in your issue, and include the risks or downside of your recommendation. Specify your recommendation for a Commission decision, and include the consequences of no action.

**Background:** This is your chance to capture the essence of the issue you have been working on. If the item responds to a Commission request, make sure to include that here. In this section, frame the issue so a person can see it as a “snapshot” with all the history that got us to this point, current concerns, and, if applicable, probable future development of the issue. This is also a great place to give the Commission any “sound bites” it might need when communicating your issues to the public, other policy makers, and the media.

**Policy issue(s):** Any decision is a “policy”, and any policy is a statement of values. Articulate what “policy” you are bringing to the Commission. Present policy issues to the Commission for action, and clearly define the policy versus operational issues before the Commission. Then briefly describe the implementation procedures the Department plans to take once the Commission makes the policy decision.

**Public Involvement/Input Summary:** Tell the Commission what public participation process(es) you used, including mailings and public forums. Be sure to summarize what the public said, both pro and con. If the public is split, say so. If you changed your recommendation because of public input, identify that as well. The Commission holds a high value on public participation.

**Action requested:** This is the punch line for the green sheet. Do not repeat the discussions described above; be concise and present action steps in logical order. **Examples:** “Adoption of the rule amendments as proposed.” OR “This is the rule briefing and public hearing opportunity. The Commission will consider final adoption of the rule proposals at its \_\_\_\_\_ meeting in \_\_\_\_\_.” If Commission action is needed at a future Commission meeting, include that information here, and briefly describe the action you will be seeking at that future time. If no Commission action is needed (now or in the known future), indicate “N/A.”

**Draft motion language:** “I move to...” Use the exact language the Commission needs to adopt the rule proposals or Policy Documents. Think through how to convert your requested action into an actual motion. Be precise and include specific WAC numbers. Example, “I move to adopt WAC XXX-XX-XXX as proposed.” If no Commission action is requested at this meeting, indicate “N/A.”

**Justification for Commission action:** Required for the official record. Articulating a justification also helps the Commission streamline its process and explain to the public why a decision is being made. This is another good place to describe the most important “sound bite” of your issue.

**Communications Plan:** The content should pick up where “Public Involvement Process” left off. Provide answers to the questions: What’s next? How will the Department get the word out to constituents/stakeholders if the rule change or policy is implemented? How will you educate the public on this issue following a decision?

Contact the Commission Office at (360) 902-2267 with questions.

Revised 10/16/08