

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting: April 15, 2011, Commission Meeting

Agenda item # : April Opening Day Lowland lake Season

Staff Contact: Craig Burley, Fish Management Division Manager, Fish Program

Presenter(s): Craig Burley, Fish Management Division Manager, Fish Program

Background:

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) has received a petition submitted by The Honorable Sam Martin Mayor Town of Conconully requesting amendments to fishing rules to change the opening day on those waters that now open the last Saturday in April. The petition requests that the Commission change the rule to open those waters one to two weeks earlier.

There are over 7,800 lakes in Washington State (lakes are bodies of water 1 acre in size or named and shown on Washington maps). Most waters are open year around; This request would affect about 230 lakes throughout the State.

Prior to 1988, all lakes opened to fishing in April on a Sunday with the date ranging from April 15th to April 21st. Exceptions were listed by water in the fishing pamphlet.

In 1988 the opening day for lakes was standardized to the last Sunday in April. This date was adopted to provide a consistent April opening date from year to year so that the angling public and businesses could plan years in advance for their vacations and marketing. The late April date also was adopted because warmer water temperatures and weather in the last week of April results in greater angler participation and angler success (catch rates are higher). A late April opening day also provides needed time for hatchery staff to stock the trout in the lakes as close as possible to the opening day to avoid bird predation.

In 1994, the statewide standard regulation for lakes, ponds and reservoirs was changed to a year around season with eight additional season exceptions. The April opening date was set to the last Saturday in April for approximately 230 lakes in Washington. The change of the April opening date from Sunday to Saturday was made creating a two day event allowing anglers traveling to different parts of the state to fish for two days instead of just one.

Between 2011 and 2020 the month of April will have five Saturdays in three of those years (2011, 2016 and 2017).

Policy issues:

Pursuant to RCW 34.05.330 should the Commission:

- a) Deny the petition in writing, stating the reasons for the denial, specifically addressing the concerns raised by the petitioner, and where appropriate, the alternative means by which it will address the concerns raised by the petitioner; or
- b) Initiate rule-making proceedings?

Public involvement process and outcome:

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) has received a petition submitted by The Honorable Sam Martin Mayor Town of Conconully requesting amendments to fishing rules to change the opening day on those waters that now open the last Saturday in April. The petition requests that the Commission change the rule to open those waters one to two weeks earlier.

No other public involvement process has occurred.

Action requested:

Initiate rule-making proceedings for a regulation proposal to change the April opening day for lowland lakes from the last Saturday in April to the fourth Saturday in April. This will ensure that on those years where there are five Saturdays in April the opening day for lowland lakes will not be delayed by one week.

Draft motion language:

I move to initiate rule-making for changing the April opening day for lowland lakes with a final decision by the Commission at the February 2012 Commission meeting.

Justification for Commission Action:

This action is needed to address the petition received by The Honorable Sam Martin Mayor Town of Conconully requesting amendments to fishing rules to change the opening day on those waters that now open the last Saturday in April.

Communications Plan:

This regulation proposal will be considered during the limited 2012-2014 sportfishing regulation process scheduled this year consistent with the Governor's executive order 10-06 suspending non-critical rule development and adoption through December 2011.