

Sportfishing Regulations 2015-16

Public Testimony



Fish Program

Presentation Outline

- Process
- Timeline and public involvement
- Written Comment – Popular topics
- Public Testimony

Process

- New 3 Year Schedule
 - Columbia Basin 2014
 - Puget Sound and Coast freshwater 2015
 - Marine finfish, forage fish and shellfish 2016
- Accept Public Proposals
 - Critical conservation need
 - Recreational opportunity
- Salmon Rule Proposals – North of Falcon

Timeline and Public Involvement

- April 25-June 15 Accept Proposals
 - 166 proposals received
 - 32 proposals recommended for further consideration
 - 46 proposals not recommended
- August 21-December 1 Public comment on proposals
 - More than 750 written comments received
- September 26-27 Brief Commission
- December 12-13 Public Hearing
- January 9-10 Commission Action
- July 1, 2015 Rules take effect

Written Public comment—Popular Topics

- Summarize comment on proposals
 - Columbia Basin Wide – Chris Donley
 - Region 1 – Chris Donley
 - Region 2 – Jeff Korth
 - Region 3 – John Easterbrooks
 - Region 5 – John Weinheimer
- Notebook materials

Columbia Basin Wide Proposals



Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Remove internal combustion motors prohibition on small streams

- 2010 Selective Gear Rules definition was modified
 - Separated Internal combustion motors prohibited
- Simplify and reduce language in pamphlet



Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Response-- Remove internal combustion motors prohibition on small streams

- Streamlining regulations is a welcome change
- Specify that unless stream specifically open to power boats, it is closed.
- Proposal unclear



Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Tenkara fly fishing gear



- Address petition to the Fish and Wildlife Commission
- Modify definition of “fly fishing only” waters
- Technique is gaining in popularity
- Uses a long limber rod with a braided Tenkara fly line

Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Response--Tenkara fly fishing gear



- Most comments support
- Suggestion to modify definition of “fly fishing only” to focus on the fly and weight
- Opposing comment that enforcement is stretched too thin to enforce
- Opposing comment that Tenkara would cause “dappling” and would result in fisher conflicts

Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Statewide general walleye rules

- Minimum size 12 in., 8 fish daily limit, only 1 over 22 in.
- Simplify regulations
- Walleye can support increased angler exploitation



Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Response-- Statewide general walleye rules

- Change length but not limit
- Allow unlimited take
- Change length to 14 or 15 inches to provide enough meat
- Some comments questioned science around this proposal



Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Modify some year round lakes to a March 1 opener

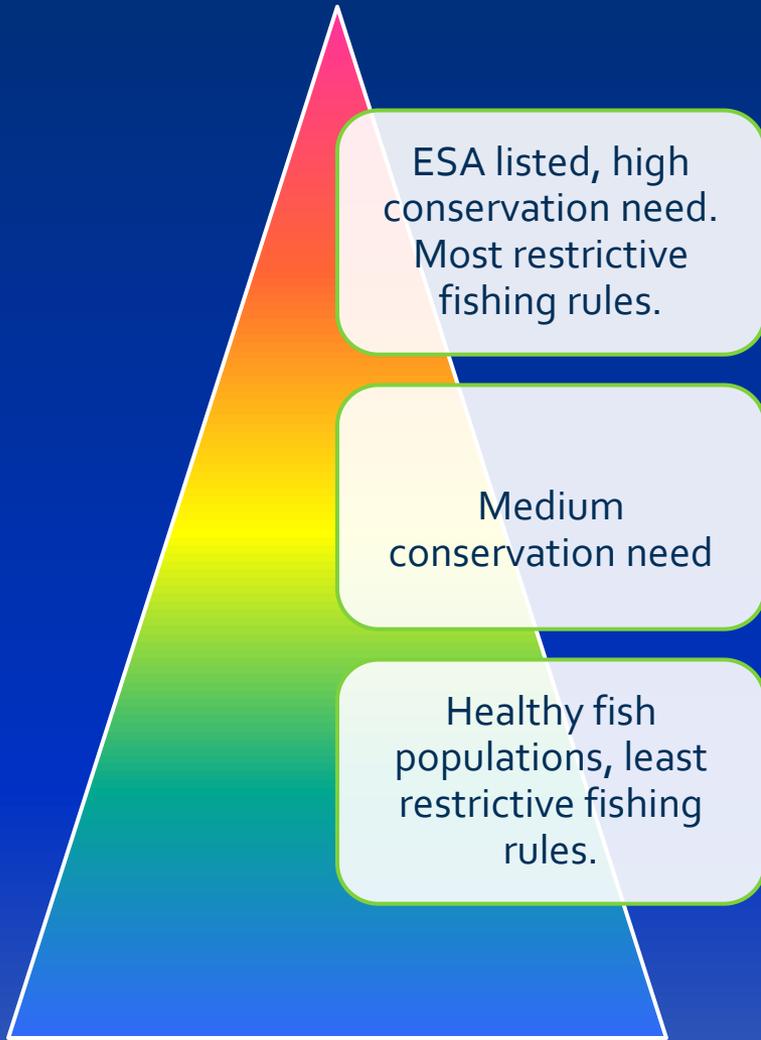
- Small ponds offer limited fishing after October 31 until they are restocked in early spring
- Changing to a March 1 opening day helps direct anglers to these waters when fishing is best
- March 1 has become the default opening day in SE WA ponds because of weather moderation and hatchery stocking schedules
- Lakes are located in the following counties: Asotin; Franklin; Kittitas; Yakima; Walla Walla

Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Response-- Modify some year round lakes to a **March 1 opener**

- Some comments welcome this change
- Most comments oppose
 - There are few opportunities for ice fishing
 - These are not natural lakes
 - Removes opportunity for families to enjoy water during winter months
 - The lakes will empty of fish faster and this will mean less opportunity in the summer months

Columbia Basin Wide Proposals



Stream Strategy for the Columbia Basin

- Closes rivers, streams, and beaver ponds to fishing, except as listed
- Objectives
 - Adjust rules based on conservation need (e.g. Implement mandatory steelhead harvest where appropriate)
 - Complete statewide implementation of strategy
- Specific changes will be highlighted in regional briefings

Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Response-- Stream Strategy

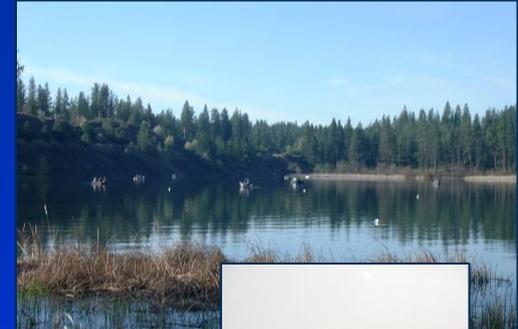
- This is a solid approach for salmon and steelhead recovery, but regret losing opportunity
- Provide more catch and release waters where populations are healthy to keep them that way
- Makes regulations more complicated
- Prefer “fly fishing only” and trout catch and release so that mortality is close to zero
- Eliminates opportunity, especially for kids, in low profile creeks that are overlooked and not listed as open



Columbia Basin Wide Proposals

Questions

Region 1



Region 1 - proposals



**Snake River Sturgeon - Expand
Catch and Release Only**

**Spring and Blue Lakes - Year Round
Season (Columbia Co.)**

Region 1 Stream Strategy

- **Brief Overview**
- **Highlighted Elements**

Region 1

Snake River Sturgeon Above Ice Harbor Dam



- Catch and release only – no retention
- Eliminating harvest will assist in rebuilding populations
- Aligns with rest of Columbia River and other Snake River impoundments

Region 1 - proposals



Response--Snake River Sturgeon - Expand Catch and Release Only

- Close the season entirely for a few years so the population can rebound
- Work to eliminate poaching
- Question science supporting this proposal

Region 1

Region 1 Stream Strategy

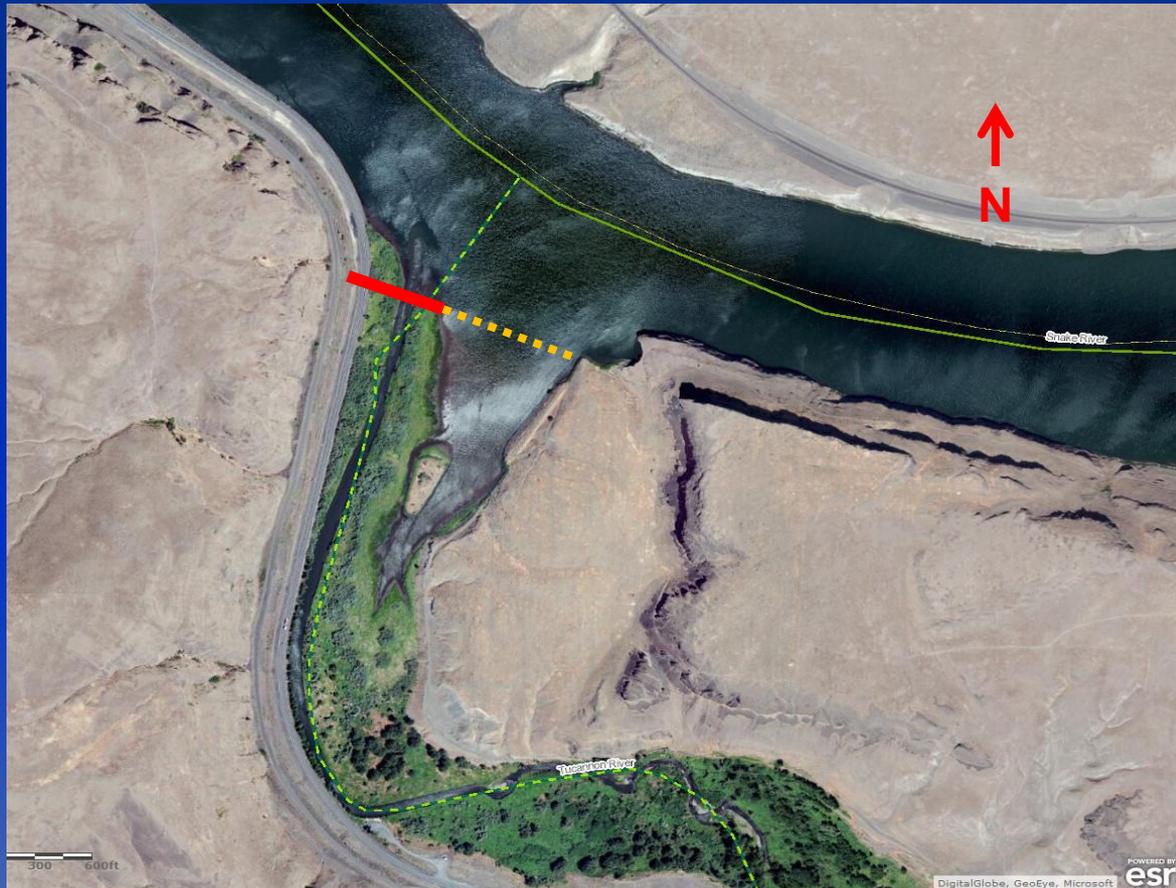
Brief Overview

Highlighted Elements

- **Tucannon River Mouth Definition Change**
- **Hatchery Steelhead Mandatory Retention**
 - Lower Grande Ronde River – Promote SH Harvest
- **Palouse River – 2 pole opportunity**
- **Sullivan Creek – cutthroat trout conservation**

Region 1

Tucannon River Mouth Definition



Region 1

Hatchery Steelhead Mandatory Retention



Reason: Reduce excess hatchery steelhead on spawning ground
Primary Emphasis – Segregated Programs

- Snake River
- Walla Walla River
- Touchet River
- Grande Ronde River (upper) / (lower)
- Tucannon River

Region 1

Palouse River 2 - Pole Opportunity

River mouth to base of Palouse Falls – June 16 to August 31

- Provides new fishing opportunity
- Promotes removal of predators: Bass, Channel Catfish, Walleye
- Low seasonal interaction with juvenile / adult steelhead & salmon



Region 1

Sullivan Creek - Cutthroat Trout Conservation

(Pend Oreille Co.)



Lower Sullivan Creek from Mouth to Mill Pond Dam

- Require barbless hooks
- Increase limit on Eastern brook trout
- Release all cutthroat trout

Region 1

Response-- Region 1 Stream Strategy

- Agree with mandatory hatchery steelhead retention
- Prefer fewer hatchery fish released
- Allowing steelhead retention on the lower Grande Ronde will increase angler use in an already crowded situation

Region 1

Questions

Region 2



Region 2

Rufus Woods Lake --Eliminate chumming

(Douglas and Okanogan counties)

- Align WDFW regulations with Colville Tribe regulations per agreement; reduce triploid fishery impact (limited resource; CCT stocked)
- Chumming is an artifact of past kokanee fishery on Rufus Woods



Region 2

Response-- Rufus Woods Lake

(Douglas and Okanogan counties)

- Most comments oppose
 - Question need to align regulations with Colville Tribe regulations
 - Prefer to continue chumming for triploid trout as they are non-native



Region 2

Washburn Lake Eastern Brook Trout Fishery (Okanogan Co.)

- Create a quality Eastern Brook Trout fishery
 - Stock sterile triploid eastern brook trout
 - Reduce trout daily limit from 2 to 1
 - Add selective gear rules
 - Prohibit internal combustion motors
 - No native trout

Region 2

Response-- Washburn Lake Eastern Brook Trout Fishery (Okanogan Co.)

- Quality brook trout fishery well received
- Question why protecting non-native species
- These fish compete with native fish
- Use tiger trout instead of brook trout, because will not reproduce if illegally transplanted

Region 2

Region 2 Stream Strategy

- Opportunity to review ALL Reg 2 stream regulations
- Increased fishing opportunity
 - Increase catch and release opportunity
 - On waters formerly closed
 - On some waters with statewide rules
 - Overall increased selective gear rules
- Conservation
 - Eastern Brook Trout more aggressive removal

Region 2

Response-- Region 2 Stream Strategy

- Okanogan River tributaries need more protection from the river to the barrier
- Disappointed to see what seems very little to no changes on our local streams around here (Plain, WA)

Region 2

Questions

Region 3



Region 3

2 pole fishing opportunities

- Allow 2 pole fishing for gamefish where opportunities exist consistent with steelhead and bull trout conservation goals
- Provide additional recreational opportunity
- Lower Yakima River (below Prosser Dam), Hanford Reach, Bumping Lake and Rimrock Lake

Region 3

Response-- 2 pole fishing opportunities

- Most comments support and request expansion of 2 pole opportunities
- Concern that 2 poling in Bumping and Rimrock lakes will elevate ESA listed bull trout incidental catch rate

Region 3

Kachess and Keechelus Kokanee daily limit (Kittitas Co.)

- Reduce daily limit from 16 to 10 kokanee
- Aligns with most statewide kokanee fisheries
- Conserves kokanee in these waters
- These populations are supported by hatchery stocking and 16 is typically only used when waters have abundant natural production (e.g. Rimrock Lake)

Region 3

Response-- McCabe Pond (Kittitas Co.)



Suggest making a catch and release pond

Opposing comment

- Pond is so small that flotation devices will interfere with bank fishers and result in angler conflicts
- Many opportunities nearby for flotation
- Flotation devices will increase transfer of and disperse existing aquatic noxious weeds

Region 3

Response-- Kachess and Keechelus Kokanee daily limit (Kittitas Co.)

- Agree that ten kokanee daily limit is plenty in these two lakes
- Agree with kokanee not counting toward daily limit for other trout
- Concern for ESA listed bull trout
 - Consider no fishing areas near mouths of spawning tributaries
 - Consider bait restrictions or hook changes

Region 3

McCabe Pond (Kittitas Co.)



- Allow non-motorized flotation devices
 - Increase fishing opportunity
 - Protects riparian habitat on this small pond with limited shoreline fishing access because of vegetation

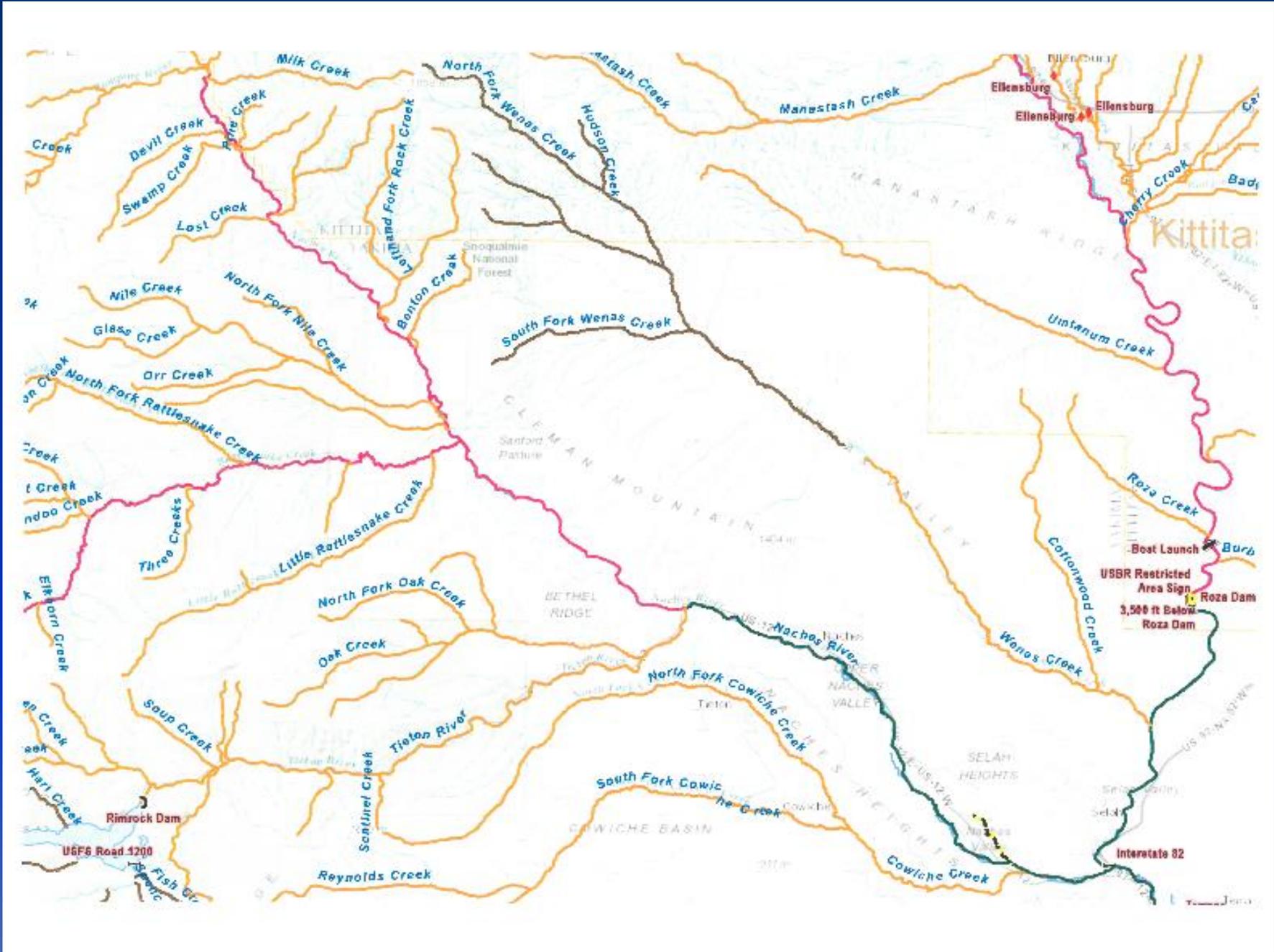
Region 3

Naches River: increase trout catch and release opportunity (Yakima Co.)



Photo credit: Kaitlyn Bernauer/Yakima Herald-Republic

- Extend catch-and-release trout fishery from Rattlesnake Creek (river mile 28) upstream 16.6 miles to Naches R. origin (r.m. 44.6) at Bumping R. / Little Naches confluence
- Maintain existing harvest opportunity below the confluence of the Tieton River (lower 17.5 river miles)



Region 3

Response-- Naches River: increase trout catch and release opportunity (Yakima Co.)



Photo credit: Kaitlyn Bernauer/Yakima Herald-Republic

- Over 270 public comments
- Greater than 80% support the catch and release proposal overall
- 55% Yakima Basin resident anglers support
- 98% of western Washington resident anglers support

Region 3

Response-- Naches River: increase trout catch and release opportunity (Yakima Co.)

■ Support

- Economic benefit –especially tourism
- Create vacation quality fishing destination similar to St. Joe in Idaho
- Plenty of nearby lakes for keeping fish
- Supports people who don't have boats and hike to fish

■ Oppose

- Prefer a one trout daily limit
- This caters to special interest groups (e.g. guides)
- Most people already practice catch and release
- Allow children to retain fish
- Locals need a river that allows them to keep healthy trout for food

Region 3

Region 3 Stream Strategy

- Primary change is an increase in trout min. size for retention from 8" to 10" to protect juvenile steelhead
- Reduction or elimination of winter whitefish seasons to provide greater protect for overwintering adult steelhead and bull trout (ESA listed)

Region 3

Response-- Region 3 Stream Strategy

- Regret losing opportunity
- Provide more catch and release
- Makes regulations more complicated
- Eliminates opportunity, especially for kids

Questions?



L. Cle Elum "Slot Limit" Kokanee/Sockeye

Photo Credit: Mike Carey

Region 5



Region 5

Cowlitz 2 pole and barbed hooks allowed (Cowlitz and Lewis counties)

- Increase harvest on hatchery steelhead
- June 1 – July 31
- Cowlitz River up to the boundary at the barrier dam.

Region 5

Response-- Cowlitz 2 pole and barbed hooks allowed (Cowlitz and Lewis counties)

Most supported, however others suggested:

- Retain barbless hooks
- Extend from May 1 to July 31
- No need for barbless hook rule in River
- Will increase snagging and flossing
- Too little space for 2 poles on banks

Region 5

Elochoman, South Fork Toutle and Green rivers—remove barbless hook requirements seasonally (Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties)

- Allow barbed hooks when only hatchery summer steelhead are available for harvest
 - No natural origin summer steelhead present
 - Salmon not expected until mid-August
- First Saturday in June through July 31 in these basins



Region 5

Response-- Elochoman, South Fork Toutle and Green rivers—remove barbless hook requirements seasonally (Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties)

- Suggestion for mandatory steelhead retention
- Most comments oppose
 - Barbless hooks should be the norm
 - Allowing barbed hooks will increase juvenile steelhead mortality
 - Confuse fishers as to where barbed hooks are illegal and compounds enforcement issue



Region 5

Swift Reservoir (Skamania Co.)—establish a maximum size for trout

- Reintroduction program for anadromous salmonids
- Adjust maximum size limit for trout to 15" to protect wild steelhead



Region 5

Response-- Swift Reservoir (Skamania Co.)—establish a maximum size for trout

- Suggestion to implement a fin clip rule for trout >15"
- Consider whatever has not been trapped by June as resident fish that will not outmigrate to the trap and allow anglers to catch and keep



Region 5

Region 5 Stream Strategy

- Many small creeks are closed to fishing
- Mandatory hatchery steelhead retention

Region 5

Response-- Region 5 Stream Strategy

- Generally agree with closed unless open
- Mandatory hatchery steelhead retention
 - Mature condition
 - Increase bag limit

Region 5

Questions

Proposals Not Recommended For Further Consideration

3 received 8 or more comments



Allow archery fishing for Channel Catfish – Columbia R. and tributaries from WA/OR border to I-182 Bridge: 11 comments

- A viable option to help reduce adult catfish numbers in anadromous waters
- Provides opportunity to eat a high quality fish that is harvested with this gear (as opposed to carp)
- Question that catfish are always in deeper water and that this proposal does not provide a significant recreational opportunity
- Bowfishing popularity is increasing quickly. Bow-fishers who wish to “hunt” catfish (a gamefish) will purchase a fishing license, thus increasing WDFW revenues.

Reinstate bag and length limits on bass, walleye, and channel catfish in the Columbia River and tributaries—8 comments

- In eastern WA there is demand from money paying fishermen for walleye and bass
- Other issues for ESA listed fish include terns, nets, cormorants, pelicans, sea lions, etc.
- Some of the best bass fishing is in the Great Lakes, where the bass co-exist with salmon and steelhead
- Bass and walleye are a draw with great economic impact on region
- Question scientific data that walleye prey on salmonids

Salmon rule requesting use of barbed hooks and allowing retention of 1 wild (non-clipped) fish—9 comments

- Do more damage to fish with barbless hooks and lose more fish
- Support barbless hook rule but allow retention of one unclipped fish –how wild are these fish?

Timeline

- Sept. 26-27 Brief Commission
- Dec. 1 Written public comment deadline
- Dec. 12-13 Public Hearing
- Jan. 9-10 Commission action
- July 1 Pamphlet —rules take effect

Questions

