

Public meetings scheduled to discuss Willapa Bay salmon management

OLYMPIA - The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has scheduled seven public meetings this fall and winter to discuss and develop a new draft policy for managing salmon fisheries in Willapa Bay.

The policy, along with the previously adopted Columbia River and Grays Harbor policies, will provide regional guidance on hatchery and harvest reform and will align fishery management with conservation and economic objectives. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, a citizen panel appointed by the governor to set policy for WDFW, is scheduled to consider adopting the draft policy in February.

The Willapa Bay salmon fisheries are extremely valuable and popular, said Steve Thiesfeld, regional fish program manager for WDFW.

"We need the public's help to identify fishery objectives and develop a policy that will ensure sustainable fisheries," he said.

The public meetings include an open house, three public workshops and three Willapa Bay salmon management ad-hoc advisory group meetings. The ad-hoc advisory committee discussions are open to the public, and those in attendance will have an opportunity to comment at the end of each meeting.

The public meetings are scheduled for:

- **Oct. 25** - WDFW fishery managers will host an open house from 2-5 p.m.; Raymond High School cafeteria, 1016 Commercial St., Raymond
- **Oct. 27** - Willapa Bay Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee, from 6-8 p.m.; public input from 8-9 p.m.; Raymond High School Library, 1016 Commercial St., Raymond
- **Nov. 1** - WDFW fishery managers will host a public workshop from 4-7 p.m.; Raymond High School cafeteria, 1016 Commercial St., Raymond
- **Nov. 13** - Willapa Bay Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee, from 6-8 p.m.; public input from 8-9 p.m.; Raymond High School cafeteria, 1016 Commercial St., Raymond
- **Nov. 20** - Willapa Bay Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee, from 6-8 p.m.; public input from 8-9 p.m.; Raymond High School cafeteria, 1016 Commercial St., Raymond
- **Dec. 6** - WDFW fishery managers will host a public workshop from 2-5 p.m.; Raymond High School cafeteria, 1016 Commercial St., Raymond
- **Jan. 17** - WDFW fishery managers will host a public workshop from 2-5 p.m.; Raymond Elks Lodge, 326 Third St., Raymond

At the Oct. 25 open house, the public will have the opportunity to learn about commission policies and Willapa Bay salmon management activities, including hatchery production, stock status and harvest.

"We'll focus our initial conversations with the public on conservation and fishery objectives, including economic and season goals for commercial and recreational fishing for Willapa Bay salmon," Thiesfeld said.

WDFW fishery managers are scheduled to brief the Fish and Wildlife Commission on the development of the draft policy during the commission's November meeting in Olympia.

Thiesfeld said WDFW will develop a range of policy options that will be discussed during the December commission meeting in Olympia. The commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the draft policy options during its January meeting.

The commission is scheduled to make a final decision at its February meeting. For more information on meeting times and places, visit the commission's webpage at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/meetings.html>.

Throughout the process, WDFW will periodically update its website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/fisheries/willapa_bay_salmon/ with more information on the development of the draft policy.

Revised by Steve Thiesfeld, 10-17-14