

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

POLICY DECISION

POLICY TITLE: Willapa Bay Salmon Management

POLICY NUMBER: C-

Cancels or
Supersedes: NA

Effective Date: March 1, 2014
Termination Date: December 31, 2023

See Also: Policies C-3608, C-3619

Approved _____ [date]
by: _____ Chair
Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

Purpose

The objective of this policy is to advance the conservation and restoration of wild salmon in Willapa Bay. Where consistent with this conservation objective, the policy also seeks to maintain or enhance the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry in the state, provide the public with outdoor recreational experiences and a fair distribution of fishing opportunities throughout the Willapa Bay Basin, and improve the technical rigor of fishery management. Enhanced transparency and information sharing are needed to restore and maintain public trust and support for management of Willapa Bay salmon fisheries.

Definition and Intent

This policy sets a general management direction and provides guidance for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) management of all Pacific salmon returning to the Willapa Bay Basin. The Willapa Bay Basin is defined as Willapa Bay and its freshwater tributaries.

General Policy Statement

This policy provides a cohesive set of principles and guidance to promote the conservation of wild salmon and steelhead and improve the Department's management of salmon in the Willapa Bay Basin. The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) recognizes that management decisions must be informed by fishery monitoring (biological and economic), and that innovation and adaptive management will be necessary to achieve the stated purpose of this policy. By improving communication, information sharing, and transparency, the Department shall promote improved public support for management of Willapa Bay salmon fisheries.

State commercial and recreational fisheries will need to increasingly focus on the harvest of abundant hatchery fish. Mark-selective fisheries are a tool that permits the harvest of abundant hatchery fish while reducing impacts on wild stocks needing protection. As a general policy, the Department shall implement mark-selective salmon fisheries, unless the wild populations substantially affected by the fishery are meeting spawner (e.g., escapement goal) and broodstock management objectives. In addition, the Department may consider other management approaches provided they are as or

more effective than a mark-selective fishery in achieving spawner and broodstock management objectives.

Fishery and hatchery management measures should be implemented as part of an “all-H” strategy that integrates hatchery, harvest, and habitat systems. Although the policy focuses on fishery management, this policy in no way diminishes the significance of habitat protection and restoration.

Guiding Principles

The Department will apply the following principles in the management of salmon in the Willapa Bay Basin:

- 1) Promote the conservation and restoration of salmon and steelhead by working with our partners (including Regional Fishery Enhancement Groups and Lead Entities) to protect and restore habitat productivity, implementing hatchery reform (see Policy C-3619), and managing fisheries consistent with conservation objectives.
- 2) The Department will work through the Pacific Salmon Commission to promote the conservation of Willapa Bay salmon and, in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, pursue the implementation of fishery management actions necessary to achieve agreed conservation objectives.
- 3) Within the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) process, the Department will support management measures that promote the attainment of Willapa Bay conservation objectives consistent with the Council’s Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
- 4) In a manner consistent with conservation objectives, seek to enhance the overall economic well-being and stability of Willapa Bay Basin fisheries.
- 5) In a manner consistent with conservation objectives, fishing opportunities will be fairly distributed across fishing areas and reflect the diverse interests of WDFW-managed fishers.
- 6) Monitoring, sampling, and enforcement programs will adequately account for species and population impacts (landed catch and incidental fishing mortality) of all recreational and WDFW-managed commercial fisheries and ensure compliance with state regulations.
- 7) If it becomes apparent that a scheduled fishery will exceed its preseason catch expectation, and the overage will put at risk the attainment of conservation objectives, the Department shall implement in-season management actions that are projected to enhance the effectiveness of fishery management relative to the attainment of the conservation objectives and impact sharing in the preseason fishery plan.

- 8) Salmon management will be well documented, transparent, well-communicated, and accountable. The Department shall strive to make ongoing improvements in the transparency of fishery management and for effective public involvement. These shall include: a) clearly describing management objectives in a document available to the public prior to the initiation of the preseason planning process; b) enhancing opportunities for public engagement during the preseason fishery planning process; c) communicating in-season information and management actions to advisors and the public; and d) striving to improve communication with the public regarding co-management issues that are under discussion.
- 9) The Department shall seek to improve fishery management and technical tools through improved fishery monitoring, the development of new tools, and rigorous assessment of fishery models and parameters.
- 10) When a mark-selective fishery occurs, the mark-selective fishery shall be implemented, monitored, and enforced in a manner designed to achieve the anticipated conservation benefits.
- 11) Areas 2T and 2U shall be managed for recreational priority. Commercial fisheries shall not begin until September 15
 - a. Alternative A. Commercial fisheries limited to one 48-consecutive hour period per week.
 - b. Alternative B. Commercial fisheries limited to one 72-consecutive hour period per week.

Fishery and Species-Specific Guidance

Subject to the provisions of the Adaptive Management section, the following fishery-and species-specific sections describe the presumptive path for achieving conservation objectives and a fair sharing of harvestable fish.

Fall Chinook Salmon

Subject to the adaptive management provisions of this policy, the Department will manage fall Chinook salmon fisheries and hatchery programs consistent with the Guiding Principles and the following objectives:

- 1) The fishery management objectives for fall Chinook salmon, in priority order, are to:
 - a. achieve spawner goals for natural-origin Chinook and hatchery reform broodstock objectives (see bullet 2);
 - b. provide meaningful recreational fishing opportunities; and
 - c. limit commercial fishery impacts to the incidental harvest of fall Chinook during fisheries directed at other species.

- 2) Fisheries will be managed with the intent of

Alternative A: achieving spawner goals for natural-origin Chinook in the Naselle and North rivers and watershed-specific broodstock management objectives within 10 years.

Alternative B: achieving spawner goals for natural-origin Chinook in the Willapa and North rivers and watershed-specific broodstock management objectives within 10 years.

In no case, shall fishery impacts in the Willapa Bay Basin result in an impact of more than {X%} of the return from the Naselle and North (or Willapa and North) rivers when the natural-origin adult return exceeds the spawner goal by less than 10%.

- 3) Commercial fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin during the Chinook salmon management period (prior to September 15)

Alternative A: will not occur.

Alternative B: will not occur except 2M and 2N may open after Labor Day weekend, and limited to one 72-consecutive hour period per week.

Coho Salmon

Subject to the adaptive management provisions of this policy, the Department will manage coho salmon fisheries and hatchery programs consistent with the Guiding Principles and the following objectives:

- 1) The fishery management objectives for coho salmon, in priority order, are to:
 - a. achieve the aggregate spawner goal for natural-origin coho and hatchery reform broodstock objectives (see bullet 2);
 - b. prioritize commercial fishing opportunities during the coho fishery management period (Sept. 15 through Oct. 14).
- 2) Fisheries will be managed with the intent of achieving the aggregate spawner goal for Willapa Bay natural-origin coho salmon. When the pre-season forecast of natural-origin adult coho is less than the aggregate goal, or less than 10% higher than the aggregate goal fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin will be scheduled to result in an impact of no more than 10% of the adult return.
- 3) Hatchery programs and fisheries will be managed to achieve watershed-specific broodstock management standards.

Chum Salmon

Subject to the adaptive management provisions of this policy, the Department will manage chum salmon fisheries and hatchery programs consistent with the Guiding Principles and the following objectives:

- 1) The fishery management objectives for chum salmon, in priority order, are to:
 - a. achieve the aggregate goal for naturally spawning chum and meet hatchery reform broodstock objectives (see bullets 2 and 3);
 - b. prioritize commercial fishing opportunities during the chum fishery management period (October 15 through October 31).
- 2) Fisheries will be managed with the intent of achieving the aggregate goal for Willapa Bay naturally spawning chum salmon. Until the spawner goal is achieved, the maximum fishery impact shall not exceed a 10% harvest rate and no commercial fisheries will occur in the period from October 15-31. If the aggregate goal has been achieved, but the pre-season forecast of adult chum is less than the aggregate goal, or less than 10% higher than the aggregate goal, fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin will be scheduled to result in an impact of no more than 10% of the adult return.
- 3) *Option associated with increased hatchery chum production: Beginning in 2018, fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin will result in an impact of no more than Y% of the return, except that commercial fisheries directed at adults returning to the Nemah Hatchery can occur in areas 2M and 2N October 15-31.*

Adaptive Management

The Commission recognizes that adaptive management will be essential to achieve the purpose of this policy. Department staff may implement actions to manage adaptively to achieve the objectives of this policy and will coordinate with the Commission, as needed, in order to implement corrective actions. Components of the adaptive management will be shared with the public through the agency web site and will include the following elements:

- 1) Annual Fishery Management Review. The Department shall annually evaluate fishery management tools and parameters, and identify improvements as necessary to accurately predict fishery performance and escapement.
- 2) In-season Management. The Department shall develop, evaluate, and implement fishery management models, procedures, and management measures that are projected to enhance the effectiveness of fishery management relative to management based on preseason predictions.
- 3) Spawner Goals. The Department shall review spawner goals to ensure that they reflect the current productivity of salmon.

Delegation of Authority

The Commission delegates the authority to the Director, through the North of Falcon stakeholder consultation process, to set seasons for recreational and WDFW-managed commercial fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin, to adopt permanent and emergency regulations to implement these fisheries, and to make harvest agreements with treaty tribes and other government agencies.