

Washington's Wild Future

A Partnership for Fish and Wildlife

Selah Regional Forum (Region 3)

August 3, 2016

The following public comments were offered by participants at an open forum on fish and wildlife issues sponsored by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) at the Selah Regional Forum. Approximately 45 participants attended the event, one of six regional forums conducted around the state.

HUNTING

- Get rid of true spike elk general season regulation in the Colockum. Respondent thought it leads to confusion and accidental violations.
- Have dog training open year-round on wildlife areas.
- A 100-yrd shooting range on the Wenas Wildlife Area will be too short of a distance. Also prefer keeping the existing range used by many along Sheep Company Road. Also suggested monitoring via cameras for security and abuses.
- Would like information on how to enhance pheasant populations, perhaps via a public workshop.
- Questioned the cost of proposed Hunting App for smart devices.
- Does not want non-consumptive users to have "equal footing at the table" with traditional users. Noted that these users do not pay their fair share. Also objected to alternative funding that would give these users "equal footing."
- Everyone should have some sort of license (hunters, fishers, anyone else recreating on public lands).
- Supported fee increase.
- Opposed tags that were justified by hunting fee increases, although generally supportive of fee increases.
- Special hunt permits for feral hogs?

FISHING

- More partnerships on hatchery production.
- Can't fish the lower Naches R. and Yakima R. below Roza Dam five months of the year; upper Naches (above Tieton R.) seven months of the year. Winter whitefish closures/season length reduction on the Naches R. and Yakima R. went too far in restricting opportunity in favor of steelhead/bull trout protection. Legitimate whitefish fishermen want more opportunity restored next rule cycle.

- Columbia River: Equitable conservation and harvest in lower and upper river (Region 3 & 5). There is a perception that more harvest is allowed below, while conservation efforts are focused on the upper Columbia.
- Simplify metrics for discussion / public understanding in Columbia River Compact proceeding discussions.
- To encourage youth participation (in addition to education / outreach, free license for under 16) consider allowing bait.
- Laments the loss of Yakima R. steelhead fishing opportunity.

FISHING LICENSE FEE PROPOSAL

- Charter boat and fishing guide license fees are too low.
- Supports the senior citizen license discount (e.g. lowering the age requirement from 70 to 65).
- Want more detail on how proposed increased fishing license fees will be spent.
- Do not reduce hatchery fish production/opportunity if you raise license fees. WDFW needs to “stand up” for recreational fishermen.
- Keep Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (RFEG) support in the funding package.

COMMERCIAL FISHING

- Commercial fishery license fee structure is not equitable. A higher percentage of commercial license revenue should come from the commercial fishermen and less from the General Fund (GF), which is supported by state taxpayers (including recreational fishermen asked to pay more for recreational licenses). Sport fishermen are subsidizing commercial fishermen with GF used to manage commercial fisheries.

CONSERVATION

- Generally supports fishing license fee proposals for funding additional enforcement officers and continuing to provide fishing and hunting opportunities.
- More enforcement for salmon/steelhead fisheries; less emphasis on warm water fishery enforcement.
- Maintaining RFEG funding in proposal was requested by three different groups:
 - ✓ Consider creative options to encourage competition for carcass/egg contract (Pass it out, not statewide).
 - ✓ RFEG’s use WDFW funds to acquire matching funds at 10 to 1 for the purpose of restoring fish populations and habitat.
 - ✓ Need sustainable funding for RFEG (Fish/Habitat restoration work benefits more than just fish...Water, Wildlife, Watershed).
- Tri-Cities Owl web cam is not working and respondent was not able to get information from WDFW as to cams and owls.
- No net loss of green dot roads or no support for funding package.