

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) Hatchery & Fishery Reform Policy Review Stakeholder Meeting

Action Items and Meeting Summary

Meeting Details

Meeting Title:	WDFW Hatchery & Fishery Reform Policy Review Stakeholder Meeting
Date/Time:	Thursday, April 11, 2019 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm
Location:	South Puget Sound Community College – Lacey Campus Room 194 – Building 1 4220 6th Ave SE, Lacey, WA 98503
Purpose:	Representatives from the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) provided stakeholders with an overview of the ongoing review process for the Hatchery and Fishery Reform Policy (C-3619), gave updates on the review process and progress that has been made, presented initial results of a stakeholder assessment, and took questions and comments about the review process.

Action Items

Item No.	Person(s) Responsible
1. Post the motion language that the Fish & Wildlife Commission (Commission) voted on to suspend policy guidelines 1-3 online on the WDFW website.	WDFW Project Team
2. Make the list of Washington State Academy of Sciences (WSAS) members participating in the science review available to the public, including a list of any supplementary subject matter experts and advisory committee members.	WDFW Project Team
3. Post all materials from the stakeholder meeting on the WDFW website for public access.	WDFW Project Team

Meeting Materials

The following materials were provided to attendees in advance of the meeting for review and consideration:

- Meeting Agenda
- News Release with access to the following materials:
 - Meeting information
 - Live stream link
 - Policy information
 - Project elements and timeline

Welcome, Introductions, and Proposed Agenda

The Facilitator, Rachel Aronson, Triangle Associates, welcomed the group and provided the meeting purpose: to provide stakeholders with an overview of the ongoing review process for the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) Hatchery and Fishery Reform Policy (H&FRP) C-3619; give updates on the review process and progress that has been made; present initial results of a stakeholder assessment; and take questions and comments about the review process. Rachel thanked everyone for attending the meeting, including Fish & Wildlife Commissioner, Barbara Baker, and noted that the meeting was streaming live on WDFW's website. The livestream will be available for the public to view as a recording after the meeting and will remain available on the WDFW livestream page: (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/livestream>).

Rachel continued with a round of introductions, starting with several WDFW staff on the H&FRP Review project team. Erik Neatherlin, WDFW, welcomed the group and thanked them for their participation and time. Rachel provided the group with an overview of the agenda, noting that time had been allocated to each agenda topic for meeting attendees to ask questions and provide comments and feedback to WDFW.

Overview of Hatchery & Fishery Reform Policy (H&FRP) Review Process

Rachel introduced Erik Neatherlin to present an overview of the H&FRP and the review process. Erik noted that his presentation was similar to the presentation he had given to the Fish & Wildlife Commission (Commission), but with additional updates and information on progress that has been made since that meeting. He stated that the goal of his presentation was to help the public understand how the components of the review process fit together, including the public engagement piece. Erik then walked the group through the presentation including:

- Background information on and an overview of hatcheries in Washington State
- Information on the history of hatchery reform in Washington State
- Elements of WDFW's Hatchery & Fishery Reform Policy
- The decision by the Commission to review the policy
- An overview of the review process elements and timeline
- Information on public engagement to date and future opportunities
- Next steps in the review process and important dates for engagement and decision-making

Erik concluded his presentation by stating that WDFW wants the policy review to include public engagement throughout the process. He stated that this meeting is a first step in the public engagement process and will serve as part of the scoping to help WDFW provide more opportunities for the public to get information and offer meaningful feedback to WDFW. Erik then opened the floor for questions and comments from meeting attendees.

Meeting attendees asked questions regarding the following topics:

- The reasoning behind the Commission's decision to suspend H&FRP guidelines 1-3.
- The timeline for when the science review materials would be available to the public.
- Clarification on the role of the Washington State Academy of Sciences (WSAS) in the review process, including a list of those working on the science review and any supplemental members involved.
- The policy evaluation process and whether WDFW would be evaluating the effectiveness of the guidelines in addition to implementation success.

- Clarification regarding the data, research, and studies that would be included in the science review.

During the question and answer period, Rachel introduced Andrew Murdoch, WDFW, who reminded the group that he is leading the evaluation component of the overall policy review process. Andrew provided additional clarification regarding the evaluation, stating that WDFW would be examining the implementation of the policy guidelines and that evaluating the effectiveness of the guidelines in achieving the intentions of the policy is a separate issue.

Meeting attendees provided the following feedback and comments:

- Concern regarding a perceived lack of transparency and communication from the Commission on its decision to suspend H&FRP guidelines 1-3.
- A request for future materials, such as motion language and draft recommendations that inform the Commission's decision-making process, be made available to the public prior to any decisions being made.
- Concern that the policy has failed and that the process to revise it is moving too slowly. Specific concerns were raised regarding the impacts on fisheries in the lower Columbia River, as well as the Cowlitz, Lewis, and Klamath Rivers.
- A request that more visual representations of hatchery production and return data be made available to the public.
- A statement that hatchery fish are important because they protect wild fish by providing more targets for predators and lessen the likelihood of a wild fish being eaten.
- Confusion regarding the policy evaluation component. Several meeting participants indicated that it had not been made clear to them that WDFW was only evaluating implementation of the policy guidelines at this time. They expressed a desire for WDFW to evaluate effectiveness, as well.
- Concern that the policy was based on a Biological Opinion.
- Concern that WDFW is too focused on protecting fish rather than the people who depend on and partake in the fish.
- Concern that WDFW will filter the scientific studies, literature, and data made available for the WSAS to use in the scientific review. A request was made that a specific study on the Clackamas River be reviewed.

Erik stated that the suspension of H&FRP guidelines 1-3 was intended to give the Commission more flexibility to address the needs of the Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) regarding chinook. He noted that State hatcheries are still under the guidance of the Hatchery Genetic Management Plans (HGMP's).

- **Action Item:** WDFW will post the motion language that the Commission voted on to suspend policy guidelines 1-3 on the WDFW website.
- **Action Item:** WDFW will make the list of WSAS members participating in the science review available to the public, including a list of any supplementary subject matter experts and advisory committee members.

H&FRP Stakeholder Assessment Report

Rachel introduced Bethany Craig, WDFW, who provided a short overview of why WDFW decided to conduct a stakeholder assessment and the value it adds to the public engagement component of the

review process. Bethany stated that WDFW wants the policy review process to be open and transparent, and it is important that stakeholders remain engaged and informed throughout the process and can provide input. She stated the purpose of the stakeholder assessment was to review a wide range of opinions on the H&FRP and the review process, as well as collect feedback on future engagement strategies. Rachel provided an overview of the stakeholder assessment methodology and summarized key takeaways and themes from the perspectives that were offered during the stakeholder interviews. Rachel asked meeting participants to speak up in the meeting today if they felt their perspectives were not reflected in the summary of the assessment.

Questions, Comments, and Feedback from Participants

Rachel opened the floor for meeting participants to voice questions, comments, and concerns to WDFW for the remainder of the meeting.

The following points and questions were raised by meeting participants:

- A statement that the original H&FRP is critical to the development of salmon recovery plans and the ongoing implementation of those recovery plans. It was noted that major changes to the H&FRP could have detrimental impacts on recovery boards' ability to implement those plans.
- Concern that those who served on the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG)¹ have not had the opportunity to address the Commission. Concern that the scientists who contributed to the HSRG are not being given the opportunity to contribute to the current science review process was also raised.
- Concern regarding implementation of the selective harvest component of the H&FRP and difficulties in implementation.
- A statement noting the importance of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the need to remember that hatchery reform was intended to keep hatcheries open even under the restrictions imposed by the ESA.
- Concern that flexibility is not a legitimate reason to suspend the policy guidelines. It was noted that suspending science-based guidelines to provide flexibility to adopt certain management actions sets an alarming precedent.
- A request that the policy evaluation process include an element of independent, unbiased evaluation external to WDFW.
- Concern that the H&FRP imposes a "one size fits all" framework on the region while some areas, especially areas with dams and very little fish passage, need hatcheries to maintain cultural and economic vitality. It was also noted that increasing hatchery production on larger, more developed rivers can serve to take fishing pressure off smaller rivers where wild fish populations can still be preserved.
- Concern regarding the parallel nature of the policy and science review. It was suggested that the science review precede the policy review so that the new science can inform the development of the new policy.
- A statement on the importance of reflecting on the history of hatchery releases by WDFW and previous transport of salmon around the region. The question of what it means to be "wild" versus "natural origin" was raised.

¹ In 1999, Congress established the HSRG to review hatchery programs in the Pacific Northwest with the goal of continuing to provide fish for harvest while, at the same time, reducing risks to natural populations and contributing to achieving conservation goals for Pacific salmon and steelhead (NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center, 2019) <https://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/efs/hatchery/review.cfm>.

- A request that WDFW consider the impact of hydropower dams on fish populations during the review process.
- Concern regarding the transparency of the science review process and a request to see any materials related to the upcoming science review workshop well in advance. It was also requested that all the materials, studies, and data being considered by WSAS be made available to the public.
- Concern that WDFW collects significant funds from consumptive users in the form of licenses and fees yet enacts policies that limit the ability of those users to access resources.
- Desire for greater representation of the perspectives of sport fishers and consumptive users in the stakeholder assessment.
- Concern that WDFW's desire to be more transparent is an empty promise.
- Request for clarification on the genetic differences between hatchery and wild fish and for more accessible data on fish returns in the region.
- It was noted that hatcheries also come at an economic cost, in the form of production, operations, and management costs that, in return, cannot be spent on wild fish recovery.
- A statement on the necessity of not only focusing on the polarized nature of hatchery reform. It was requested that WDFW be mindful to not further exacerbate that divide when reporting out on perspectives and opinions heard from stakeholders.
- A request for all meeting materials to be made available in advance, including presentations.
- Concern that increased harvest allocations resulting from increased hatchery production would limit the ability of increased hatchery production to effectively feed the orcas.
- A statement regarding the need for fundamental changes in harvest and other "H" factors, such as the hydropower projects affecting passage in river systems.

Erik stated that WDFW is not suspending its commitment to science - it is tasked with updating the science that underlies the H&FRP. He noted that the science review will incorporate previous work from the HSRG. He highlighted the importance of the science review being independent and unbiased. He noted that it is the role of WDFW staff to review WDFW's policy, however, the goal of this public engagement process is to make sure that review is open and transparent. He acknowledged the concerns regarding the "one size fits all" nature of the H&FRP and stated WDFW is considering those concerns. Erik stated that he will confer with his colleagues and WDFW staff to discuss opportunities for providing the public with draft materials as early as possible.

Rachel highlighted several ways stakeholders can follow up with WDFW after the meeting, including written comment cards and contacting Eric Kinne and Andrew Murdoch directly with further input. Rachel reminded the group that the materials from the meeting and other project information would be available on the WDFW website. Rachel stated that WDFW was planning a longer, more in-depth stakeholder workshop for later in the year.

- **Action Item:** WDFW will post all materials from the stakeholder meeting on the WDFW website for public access.

Additional Comments, Feedback, and Questions

Rachel opened the floor for additional comments and input from meeting participants. The following questions and comments were posed:

- Concern regarding license fees being used to fund culverts rather than hatcheries.

- The threatened nature of wild fish species and the importance of local adaptations for resiliency and recovery of local wild fish populations.
- It was noted that several letters had been written to WDFW regarding the review of the H&FRP from fisheries and conservation scientists and former Commission members describing their perspectives.
- Clarification on the intent of the H&FRP to allow hatcheries to function in co-existence with the ESA and continue to support fisheries, while also meeting ESA requirements.
- The need to focus not just on hatcheries, but also on the other H's (harvest, hydropower, habitat).
- A representative from the Colville Tribes read a statement from the Tribe's Anadromous Division Director, noting that the H&FRP has only been in effect for 10 years and that many of the guidelines, including the HSRG recommendations, have not been implemented. It was noted that many of the guidelines, if fully implemented, will take generations to yield measurable results on wild fish. The statement cautioned against revising management strategies after such a short time.
- A representative from Salmon Defense read a statement from the Billy Frank Junior Salmon Coalition and noted the need to address the issue of habitat. The statement highlighted the importance of employing best hatchery practices when increasing hatchery production to provide prey for orcas. The statement expressed confidence that hatchery production can be increased in a manner consistent with wild fish recovery if best practices and targeted strategies based on science are employed.
- The efforts of tribes to follow the HSRG recommendations, including using selective harvest was recognized.

Erik thanked everyone for their comments and reminded the group that Andrew Murdoch and Eric Kinne will be the points of contact for the H&FRP review project moving forward. He stated that Ron Warren, WDFW, would attend future meetings and be engaged in the review process, as well.

Summary and Next Steps

The Facilitator thanked the attendees for their participation, input, helpful feedback, and time. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Points of Contact for WDFW's review of the Hatchery & Fishery Reform Policy

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