

Joint-State Columbia River Fishery Policy Review Committee

August 29, 2019

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Location: WDFW Region 5 Office, Ridgefield WA

Meeting Summary Notes and Decisions

Attendance:

Bruce Buckmaster – ODFW Commissioner	David Graybill – WDFW Commissioner
Jill Zarnowitz – ODFW Commissioner	Bob Kehoe – WDFW Commissioner
Michael Finley – ODFW Commissioner	Don Mclsaac – WDFW Commissioner
Mark Labhart – ODFW Commissioner	Kelly Susewind – WDFW Director
Holly Akenson – Previous ODFW Commissioner	Ron Warren – WDFW Director of Fish Policy
Curt Melcher – ODFW Director	Ryan Lothrop – WDFW Staff
Ed Bowles – ODFW Staff	Chris Donley – WDFW Staff
Tucker Jones – ODFW Staff	
Chris Kern – ODFW Staff	
John North – ODFW Staff	

ODFW Support Staff

April Mack – ODFW Staff

WDFW Support Staff

Matt Davidson – WDFW Staff
Ben Anderson – WDFW Staff
Nikki Kloepfer – WDFW Staff
Tami Lininger – WDFW Staff
Myrtice Dobler – WDFW Staff

Opening Remarks and Adoption of Agenda

Commission and staff introductions.

The Committee adopted the agenda with the removal of Range of Alternatives (RoA) Spring Chinook Issue 5, allocation of unused commercial impacts, from discussion at this meeting,.

Public Comment

Public testimony was set to five minutes each and public were encouraged to focus testimony on items on the agenda.

Public testimony was received from: Irene Martin, John Foltz, Greg King, Robert Sudar, Liz Hamilton, Heath Heikkila, Steve Fick, and Greg Johnson.

Policies and Regulations in 2020 and Beyond

Review and Refinement of the Range of Alternatives (RoA) for Analysis

Chris Donley presented an overview of the Snake River spring Chinook sport fishery.

Staff presented analysis results of RoA Spring Chinook Issue 3, Alternative 3 and the three remaining sub-options from Spring Chinook Issue 4. There was discussion on how the analysis was performed, and considerations for how these options affect fish management.

Decisions Under Spring Chinook Policy Issue 3: Allocation of Upriver Spring Chinook Within Recreational Fisheries

- Alternative 1 (65%/35%) – Topic discussed and designated as deprioritized/inactive.
 - Rationale: In addition to staff member’s analysis, this alternative is out of the range of what was originally proposed by SE Washington stakeholders. To date, the PRC has not identified an increased allocation to mid-Columbia River as an objective. The allocation of 65% to the lower river is lower than the resulting allocation from subtracting 500 fish to be transferred upriver, which the Committee viewed as beyond the level of change desired.
- Alternative 2 (85%/15%) – Topic discussed and designated as deprioritized/inactive.
 - Rationale: In addition to staff member’s analysis, this alternative is out of the range of what was originally proposed by SE Washington stakeholders.
- Alternative 3 (+500) – Topic discussed and designated as deprioritized/inactive.
 - Rationale: This was done in favor of adding an alternative of 70%/30% due to the difficulty of annually managing a static 500 upriver fish transfer and associated impacts across various run sizes. Further, the analysis showed that within recent run sizes, the net effect of this alternative was very similar to a simple 70%/30% allocation.
- NEW Alternative 4 (70%/30%) – Commissioners requested analysis of a new alternative with sub-options of ‘4a’ and ‘4b.’
 - This allocation appears less complex than adding 500 upriver fish from the lower river’s allocation to the Snake River fisheries’ allocation but achieves a similar result.
 - Sub-option 4a: 70%/12.5%/17.5% (below Bonneville/mid-Columbia/Snake)
 - Sub-option 4b: 70%/10%/20% (below Bonneville/mid-Columbia/Snake)

Decisions Under Spring Chinook Policy Issue 4: Provide Improved Season Stability for Upriver Spring Chinook Recreational Fisheries

- Option 3 (lower river buffer only) - Topic discussed and designated as deprioritized/inactive.
 - Rationale: This option would reduce the lower river fishery, and would not add to the Snake River fishery. It would increase the risk of exceeding allocations in the Bonneville to State Line fisheries.
- Option 4 (Upriver season set) - Topic discussed and designated as deprioritized/inactive.
 - Rationale: Fixed seasons would increase the likelihood of exceeding allocation and impacts of the non-treaty share. A set season works well when you have limited entry or no allocation issues. In this situation, set seasons are not practical due to variations in annual run sizes and other issues. This option would likely not result in meaningful opportunity.

- Option 8 (No lower river extension) - Topic discussed and designated as deprioritized/inactive.
 - Rationale: Under this option, the lower river may not be able to achieve its sub-allocation. While this would provide additional assurance of not exceeding, it also contains the biggest risk of leaving non-treaty fish unused. It might also lead to longer lower river seasons adopted initially, with in-season curtailments, which is less precautionary, than the current approach.

Spring Chinook Policy Issue 1: Spring Recreational/Commercial Allocation

The Committee postponed this agenda item due to lack of time. Commissioners requested a new alternative of 65%/35% for future discussions.

Spring Chinook Policy Issue 2: Allowable Spring Mainstem Commercial Gear

Reviewed description.

- Alternative 1- Non-tangle net alternative gear. Topic discussed and designated as deprioritized/inactive.
 - Rationale: There are not currently any non-tangle net alternative gears available and feasible for use in this fishery. Eliminating tangle net and gill net gear would eliminate the only gears that could be used in spring mainstem seasons.

Other Measures in the RoA: General Policy Discussions

The PRC discussed the following four matters as possible policy inclusions in a final recommendation.

Increased Alternative Commercial Gear Development and Implementation

Topic discussion included a review of prior PRC discussions and new ideas about cataloguing areas and information.

- The Committee continued to support moving forward with this for further discussion at future meetings.
- It would be useful for a workgroup to catalog
 - The current state of analysis of what gears might work, in a “fact based review”
 - A catalog of river environments below Bonneville Dam and where different alternative gears might be most effective, area-by-area
 - A reexamination of what else is available, including new studies or improved study designs
- The Committee recognized the need to have support from the commercial fishery, and financial and fishery impact funding for a successful program to proceed.

Commercial License Buyback Programs – Other Measures: Issue 2

Based on PRC discussion at the January and February PRC meetings, the PRC previously marked this topic inactive. It was suggested by the Chair to bring back the topic for re-examination, since the focus on 2019 concurrency and season setting has passed. At the next meeting, the PRC would like to consider a few paragraphs for the final recommendation policy document. The subgroup/committee continue to work on a report that identifies the potential objectives of a buyback program.

- The resulting buyback program policy would need to be conducted in a coordinated manner in both states
- It would need to identify a common objective(s)
- It would need a process for input from affected parties

Hatchery Production Enhancement and Limitation on Sport Fishery Guide/Charter Licenses- Other Measures: Issue 1

These topics were added to the list of assignments (above) for the subgroup to draft possible policy language for PRC discussion at the next meeting.

Action Item: A subgroup (WDFW Commissioner McIsaac, ODFW Commissioner Akenson, Chris Kern and Ron Warren) was tasked to develop some brief policy language for review by the PRC and potential inclusion in a policy document on the following four topics: a) alternative commercial fishing gear, b) commercial license buyback program, c) hatchery production goals, and d) limitations on recreational guide/charter licenses.

Other Matters in Achieving Concurrency in 2020 and Beyond

Voluntary Barbless Hooks

There was a review of what happened at the August 2, 2019 Oregon Commission meeting. Oregon did not set voluntary barbless into permanent rule for 2020. This was done with the understanding that the topic would be revisited in future PRC meetings, and by the full Oregon Commission who would receive a full briefing from staff and provide time for public comment.

Commercial fishing advisory committee for Emerging Fisheries

Seines and other alternative gears are not currently legal under Washington statute. Therefore Washington must pursue alternative gears under statutes for emerging fisheries and is required to establish an advisory group. The recruitment for the group has started, and the intention is to ensure that it is fully compatible with the work of PRC.

Oregon Senate Bill 830 (2013) removed prohibitions on these commercial fishing gears in Oregon, so there is not a similar emerging fishery process requirement in Oregon.

Future Process and Schedule

The next meeting is scheduled for October 1, 2019 with a start time of 8 a.m.

Public testimony will be accepted. Staff was requested to provide a method of accepting written public comment expanding the public comment opportunity for consideration by PRC members.

Conclusionary Matters

Staff Assignments for next meeting

- Provide all remaining analysis on alternatives in the RoA that the PRC has not discussed for 2020 and beyond.
- Direction was given on analysis of spring Chinook Issue 5, and summer Chinook Issue 2 - it would be useful for staff to provide the following information to aid in a decision for either of the options under consideration:
 - What the picture of increased escapement looks like, and how important these impacts are
 - What the open fisheries on unused impacts have been, and how important are those fishery opportunities
- The policy language subgroup is to draft policy language for the four topics listed above.
- Staff is to determine if an 'electronic portal' method can be provided for acceptance of public comment, and if available, notify the public of this option. Information received would be forwarded to PRC members in advance of the next meeting.