

Joint-State Columbia River Fishery Policy Review Committee

Narrative Descriptions and Analysis of Policy Issues, Alternatives and Options

UPPER COLUMBIA SUMMER CHINOOK – Issue 2: Allocation of unused commercial impacts

October 22, 2019

Issue 2: Allocation of unused commercial impacts for Upper Columbia summer Chinook

Description

This issue involves allocation of impacts from the commercial fishery that are not used during the season.

- Status Quo
 - The two states have different policies/rules regarding the use of unused non-treaty commercial Upper Columbia summer Chinook allocation, as described in the Upper Columbia summer Chinook Issue 1.
 - This has not yet been addressed by the PRC.
- Alternative 1
 - OR Policy: apply unused non-treaty commercial allocation to escapement.
- Alternative 2
 - WA policy: apply unused non-treaty commercial allocation to recreational fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam (if they can be used) or to aid in escapement.

Status of Consideration: Active for further analysis.

Unused impacts are those fish that fall within the *U.S v Oregon* or ESA guidelines but have not been utilized by the fisheries. These fish have already been accounted for in the conservation objectives of the *U.S. v Oregon* Management Agreement and the WDFW/Colville agreement, and so are harvestable. There are no ESA guidelines for Upper Columbia summer Chinook, as this population is not ESA-listed. The *U.S v Oregon* Management Agreement provides a harvest rate schedule for all fisheries based on an agreed-to escapement framework that provides increased numbers of spawners at higher run sizes.

Results

To analyze the impacts of unused allocation of Upper Columbia summer Chinook in the commercial fishery, the allowable gear type must be considered. Currently, gill nets are the only economically viable mainstem commercial gear available, as tangle net and most other alternative gear use is infeasible due to the simultaneous presence of shad, steelhead, and sockeye. If gill nets are allowed to be used in the mainstem commercial fishery, then in most years, a large part of the allocation would be used. Table 1 shows the allowed commercial catch shares compared to the actual harvest during 2013-2017. During 2013-2016, the commercial fishery utilized an average of 105% of their allocation. However, in 2016 adaptive management and additional commercial opportunity provisions were utilized per policy to allow the mainstem non-treaty commercial fishery to access unused recreational allocation. Due to policy changes in 2017, gill net gear was not allowed for mainstem commercial fisheries, and there has been no mainstem commercial fishery since then; a few Upper Columbia summer Chinook are caught annually in Select Area fisheries.

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Table 1. Percent of Upper Columbia summer Chinook Catch Utilized in the Commercial Fishery

	Postseason Allowed	Actual Harvest	% of Allowed
2013	2,145	1,987	93%
2014	2,601	2,788	107%
2015	4,068	4,043	99%
2016 ¹	2,513	3,050	121%
2017 ²	949	47	5%
Average	2,061	1,990	85%

¹*Adaptive management provision to access unused recreational allocation. In 2016, additional mainstem commercial opportunity was provided.*

²*Gill net gear was not allowed in the mainstem. No mainstem fishery occurred.*

If gill net gear is not allowed for mainstem commercial fishing, or if mainstem commercial fishing is otherwise prohibited, then nearly all of the commercial allocation, other than a small percentage caught in Select Areas, would be unused. About 50% of the Upper Columbia summer Chinook run is comprised of wild fish (2010-2016 average unmarked Chinook at Bonneville Dam was 52%). If the commercial fishery only utilized about 5% of their allocation in Select Area fisheries, the number of unused fish would be about 1,900 (95% of 1,990), of which about 50% would be wild/unmarked. The marked fish will be harvested in recreational and Colville tribal fisheries upstream of Priest Rapids Dam, as there is not a mechanism for passing marked fish through mark-selective fisheries. The unmarked fish will accrue to escapement, minus removals in Zone 6 treaty fisheries, and some small amount of passage loss. The conservation benefits of additional unmarked fish escapement is unclear, as the current management framework already provides for increased levels of spawning escapement when run sizes permit.