

January 29, 2020

Mary Wahl, Chair
Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission

Salem, OR _____

Re: Columbia River Salmon Management Policy

Dear Chair Wahl:

On behalf of the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission), I am writing to communicate the results of our January 16-18, 2020, Commission meeting on the review of Columbia River Salmon Management Policy (Policy). First, the Commission greatly appreciates the good work of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife staff over the course of 2019 on this important topic of mutual interest and appreciate your communication in advance of the January Commission meeting.

Towards the goal of achieving a high level of certainty on upcoming salmon fisheries in joint waters of the Columbia River, the Commission delegated responsibility to our Director Kelly Susewind to negotiate directly with your Director Curt Melcher with the goal of achieving a concurrent regulatory approach in 2020, and requested Director Susewind report the results of these negotiations at the Commission's upcoming February meeting. Given the recent salmon run-size forecast information, it appears likely that many of the current differences between the Washington Policy and Oregon's rules are moot in 2020. Nevertheless, the Commission believes it is important to strive for as much certainty as possible as both States plan for the 2020 season. However, the Commission has provided direction to Director Susewind that this negotiation process between our respective Directors is limited to 2020. Our Commission believes that future changes to the Policy, if any, should be based on the best scientific information available and an open, transparent process, as opposed to a one-year negotiated compromise between the two Directors.

During our January Commission meeting, several Commissioners expressed their desire to move forward with the ongoing Commission review process with the goal of completing the review in a timely manner. In November 2018, WDFW published its comprehensive review of the Policy performance over its initial five years. *See Columbia River Basin Salmon Management Policy C-3620, 2013 – 2017*. The Executive Summary of the document states:

The large economic benefits for both commercial and recreational fisheries expected from the Policy were not observed during the implementation period. Commercial Select Area enhancements and alternative gear development have not replaced mainstem fisheries. Recreational fisheries have only seen marginal benefits to changes in allocations. The expectations in the development of the Policy were not met.

Letter composed by Commissioner Kehoe for February 2020 Commission meeting discussion.

Over the course of 2019, the Joint-State Columbia River Salmon Fishery Policy Review Committee (PRC) completed a substantial amount of analysis on alternatives to address current shortcomings in the Policy identified in the comprehensive review. In addition, the PRC explored new policy initiatives intended as improvements. The Commission has scheduled an agenda item for our February 7-8, 2020 meeting to decide the next steps in concluding our Policy C-3620 review process in a manner that is timely and includes public comment opportunity in both eastside and westside areas of Washington State.

The Commission acknowledges and respects your decision to suspend the PRC process for the time being. We wish you much success in your newly appointed position as chair of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission

Sincerely,

/s/ Larry Carpenter

Chair, Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

C: Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission
Kelly Susewind
Ron Warren
Bill Tweit