

Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: October 24, 2020

Agenda item: Willapa Bay Salmon Management Policy (C-3622) Comprehensive Review

Presenter(s): Chad Herring, Anadromous Resource Policy Analyst
Ron Warren, Director of Fish Policy

Background summary:

In the fall of 2014, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC), supported by Department staff, initiated a process in order to develop a salmon management policy for Willapa Bay. The intent of the policy is to provide Department staff with general guidance and management objectives for salmon management in Willapa Bay.

To inform the development of this policy, a Willapa Bay Advisory Group was formed. The group consisted of stakeholders representing recreational and commercial fishers. Public engagement in the development of Policy C-3622 included four meetings with the group, four public workshops, and one workshop with the Pacific County Commissioners. These meetings took place in fall 2014 through spring 2015.

In June 2015, the policy was adopted by the FWC as the Willapa Bay Salmon Management Policy – C-3622. The objectives of the policy “is to achieve the conservation and restoration of wild salmon in Willapa Bay and avoid ESA designation of any salmon species. Where consistent with this conservation objective, the policy also seeks to maintain or enhance the economic well-being and stability of the commercial and recreational fishing industry in the state, provide the public with outdoor recreational experiences, and an appropriate distribution of fishing opportunities throughout the Willapa Bay Basin. Enhanced transparency, information sharing, and improved technical rigor of fishery management are needed to restore and maintain public trust and support for management of Willapa Bay salmon fisheries.” The policy recognizes uncertainty in implementation, so depends on continued economic and biological analysis, and relies on an adaptive management approach.

The implementing structure of the policy consisted of two phases; phase-one covered years 1 through 4 post adoption (covering the 2015 through 2018 fisheries) and phase-two, years 5 through 21 (July 2019 through June 2035). In 2018, the FWC provided staff with additional guidance for management of salmon fisheries prosecuted in Willapa Bay applicable to the 2018 season only.

The Commission requested a comprehensive and thorough review of the implementation and performance of the policy in Phase-one. This briefing will provide Commissioners with an overview of the comprehensive review document.

Staff recommendation:

Review only, no staff recommendation

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

The Commission will need to review the results and determine what if any steps are next.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

Not applicable.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Public involvement in the review is included throughout the review process. To date department staff have sought public input through twelve public or advisory group meetings. These meetings began in January of 2018 and concluded with a public meeting held via webinar on August 18, 2020. Notes from all the meetings are attached as Appendix 6 in the review document and are also available online on the Willapa Bay Salmon Advisory Group webpage.

The review process will conclude in the form of a final presentation to the FWC summarizing information from a detailed report intending to provide answers to specific questions regarding the implementation and performance of Policy C-3622. Questions which are to be developed with commissioner, advisory, and public involvement.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Department staff will seek Commission approval of the Willapa Bay Salmon Management Policy comprehensive review document assignment as being complete. Next steps will be determined by the Commission upon reviewing the results of the comprehensive review.

Draft motion language:

Not applicable.

Post decision communications plan:

If the Commission requests additional analysis or development of potential adaptive management steps, those requests should be communicated to stakeholders via the webpage developed for the Willapa Bay Salmon Management Policy Review on the Agency website as well as through a post meeting press release.