

2021 Willapa Bay North of Falcon Public Meeting

Via Zoom Platform

March 17, 2021 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

WDFW Staff: Mark Baltzell, Kyle Adicks, Leah Snyder, Marlene Wagner, Barbara McClellan, Lyle Jennings, Jody Pope, James Losee, Chad Herring

Mark Baltzell –

- Welcome opening statement
- PowerPoint presentation
 - Meeting purpose
 - Information on forecasted returns, answer questions, and solicit input for fisheries
 - Staff introductions and structure
 - NOF Process
 - Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) - International
 - Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) - Coastal
 - North of Falcon – Local WDFW, ODFW and Tribes north of Cape Falcon, OR
 - Forecasts at the end of February
 - Model fisheries to determine which stocks are the constraints
 - Negotiate with treaty tribes depending on area
 - Public meeting schedule
 - February 23 – PFMC Ocean Public hearing
 - February 24 – Grays Harbor fisheries discussion
 - March 31 – North of Falcon #2
 - April 5 – Willapa Bay Fisheries Discussion
 - April 6 – Grays Harbor fisheries discussion
 - April 6-9, 12-15 – PFMC
 - All meetings are online and documents for this meeting are also on the WDFW website
 - Rule Making Process
 - CR-101 filing in January
 - CR-102 – preferred changes for rules
 - Written comments, public hearing or identify errors
 - CR-103 – describes changes to rules
 - 2021 PFMC Ocean Alternatives for Chinook and Coho
 - There is a zero-fishing option for both chinook and coho for consideration. We have several poor returns expected. State and treaty tribes wanted to have all options available for consideration.
 - Showed graphs of historical ocean quotas

Marlene Wagner takes over presentation:

- Willapa Bay trend graphs
 - Chinook escapement goal not reached since 2010
 - Coho – have only met escapement goal once in the last six years
 - Chum – escapement goal has been made in all years since policy implementation except 2017
- 2021 Willapa Salmon Forecasts
 - Chinook: 3,924 natural, 30,470 hatchery

- Coho: 19,040 natural, 61,614 hatchery
 - Chum: 38,013 natural, 1,064 hatchery
- 2021 Management Objectives
 - Chinook
 - Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) adopted interim guidance on March 12, 2021 for Willapa Bay
 - Actively manage not to exceed 20% natural origin Chinook impact rate
 - Suspend time and area restrictions for comm fisheries south of commercial area 2T
 - Determine daily limits for recreational fisheries
 - Continue to development and implementation of test fisheries and in-season update models
 - Coho
 - Achieve aggregate spawner goal for natural origin coho
 - Prioritize commercial fishing opportunities Sept 16 – Oct 14
 - Provide recreational fishing opportunities
 - Chum
 - Achieve aggregate spawner goal for naturally spawning chum
 - Provide commercial fishing opportunities
 - Provide recreational fishing opportunities

Mark Baltzell –

All public comments can be submitted on our website

If you want to be added to our distribution list, the email is listed: WillapaBay@dfw.wa.gov

Public Comment:

Ross Barkhurst

- Question: Model A that has been shared – Where do you come up with 8000 recreational chinook if CRC cards have not been submitted and since fisheries were closed last year?

Mark Baltzell – Hopefully this is something we can cover offline or wait until we get to the modeling section of this presentation

Chad Herring: We have marine recreational monitoring, but we don't have active monitoring of freshwater fisheries. We use a recent year avg as a place holder. All 2020 data are noted as preliminary. Those data will be updated when the data comes in and will be used for next year once they are updated.

Norm Reinhardt

- Clarified how to unmute yourself

Presentation continues:

Jody Pope

- References handout from distribution that was shared yesterday. This is the backside of planning model handout.
 - TAMM – Terminal Area Management Model used to model Willapa Bay fisheries
 - This handout shows runsizes, catch, escapements, and harvest rates. This is this year's abundances and last year's fisheries. This handout also contains the commercial schedule and the recreational regulations by system (river sections, dates, daily limits, two pole opportunity)
 - If anyone wants to walk through this more, the WB team is happy to do that.

- References another handout – Model summary
 - Expected impact rates, expected escapements, policy priorities and allocation
 - Note: Model A is our starting model, and this will change as we move through North of Falcon based on the suggestions, we receive
- References handout – public suggestions and comments received: Only one for the Naselle to-date

Public comment

Francis Estalilla

- WB recreational advisor
- Wants clarity on the Chinook interim guidance from FWC
 - Heard the 20% for Chinook impacts even though he disagrees with this
 - Also heard we would lift the restrictions south of bay for commercial fishery but didn't hear anything about 2T
 - The marine recreational fishery is constrained by Forks Creek hatchery production. Their ability to harvest fish is directly tied to the production from Forks Creek hatchery.
- Was just south of the bay open to commercial fishing or are the entire bay opened now

Chad Herring - You are right about the guidance. What you are looking at is last year's fisheries with this year's abundances to use as a tool where we should start the discussion about constraints and opportunities.

- Francis objects to any Area 2T days prior to Labor Day in stat weeks 37 and 38

Andy Mitby

- We need to be able to work on the model because it's hard to give suggestions this way
- When can we work with the model?

Mark Baltzell – I don't know what the staff plans are for sharing

Jody Pope – We would be happy to send out a model to you if that is what you are requesting

Andy Mitby – Until then, we will work on a plan within the management parameters

Ross Barkhurst

- In Nemah, there a lot of bucks and we all like making eggtake at the hatchery
- Chinook – 3 fish, only one female, all marked
- Naselle River
 - Float only rule until October 15.
 - Open upper stretch of river under the float rule

Steve Gacke

- During presentation, mentioned there is a poor forecast for coastal coho.
- Look at policy where it talks about shared opportunity between marine and freshwater recreational fisheries. We have not made coho escapement 4 of the last 5 years.
- There should be 0 retention of wild coho for 5 years. Management of coho is destroying late coho runs. This is unacceptable.
- Allowing retention is in violation of the policy. Look and do some conservation.
- We need to restore wild run.
- He submitted jig head rule in Naselle River. There have been serious altercations, and something needs to be done.
- WDFW enforcement is aware of the issues.

Tim Hamilton

- He has process comments – We have always had access to season models. Don't know why that wasn't shared. It was intentional. We need forecast model, current status of RR and planning model.
- Strongly encourages you to fix problem
- If there was a copy of a motion on the floor of the FWC, he wants it. Present any written documentation
- Wants staff/agency to acknowledge that the FWC policy is still in effect.

Mark Baltzell –

- Heard earlier from Jody that those models would be going out to everyone.
- As far as what was presented to the FWC, don't know of any documents given to the FWC but the presentation is online
- The current policy is in place to think about the resource and conservation.

Mike Wallace

- Has there been any thoughts to recreational anglers donating eggs from hens?
- Why don't you forget about the Chinook in Nemah hatchery and release 30 million Chums?

James Losee – We've used voluntary broodstock collection throughout the state for a variety of species. You are highlighting disease issues are related to climate and densities.

Chad Herring – We do have a history of using volunteer broodstocking effort for chum programs but it's not something we have used for Chinook.

Greg McMillan

- On the interim guidance, does it give a specific percentage by user group?

Mark Baltzell – the guidance was up to 20% but I don't believe it gave specific guidance

Chad Herring – the guidance did not have specific guidance for sectors. Noted slides 15 in presentation – we would plan on rec fisheries being in place first then use the remaining impacts for Commercial fisheries

Greg McMillan

- We should keep Naselle River closed from Hwy 4 bridge up stream until Oct 16
- Thinks the twitching jig rule is a good thing and might stop some illegal fishing

Francis Estalilla

- If you are having trouble meeting eggtake goals and have pre-spawn issues, have a one female limit.
- He disagrees that the public can't identify the difference between males and females. It would be educational to post pictures what a spawning female looks like. He says it's obvious.
- Twitching jig rule – Based on feedback from a group he has spoken with, why would you take away a legitimate fishing technique?
 - Enforce the rules already on the books, don't take away opportunity by add more rules
- The reason why wild coho can be retained in the marine area because the gear is already in the water. Wild coho are a horrible catch and release fish in transition water/tidewater. AK research has 70% mortality. If there is a conservation concern, we would rather not fish if we have to release them.

Cindy Pierce

- Landowner on Naselle River
- Wants to confirm that there will be no fishing above the bridge until after Oct 16.
- Also wants to confirm that we are not advertising the fishing grounds. How will you assure me that there will be no trespassing on my property? WDFW enforcement are occupied in the woods. There are physical confrontations. If caught, are they banned from fishing if caught?
- Would like to see the twitch jig banned on the Naselle River

James Losee – We have enforcement challenges, but we are proud of what our enforcement does in Willapa. Truth is we are promoting fisheries, but we are not promoting people violating laws or enter private property illegally. Let us know as quick as you can so we can get enforcement there.

Lance Gray

- There are a lot of people who cannot tell the difference between a male and a female
- I agree with the no twitching rule
- The issue I have stems from lack of money or people to actively find how many natural fish we have between the commercial fishery compared to spawning grounds. We are just not able to encounter those fish when they reach the rivers.
- We should look to work together (rec, commercial, and state) and try to come up with a plan where we get more accountability for natural fish. Test fishing once a week with observers and whatever observer information we can get from the recreational fishery could be used to evaluate what is there. This has been done in other fisheries.
- The commercial fishery harvest about 25% natural coho in area 2M but in the river/hatchery, it was only 1% natural coho.
- Where are we losing all of these fish?

James Losee – We've had this discussion before. We should talk about where the surveys see the natural coho. We should follow through over the next coming months. There is the idea that the commercial fishery has information that can help us inform us in-season. We are exploring new tools. We could get creative by designing a fishery in a way that we don't currently have. James will set up a meeting with Lance in the next week.

Lance Gray - This is not something we can solve this NOF.

Greg McMillan

- Supports Lance's talking points. There are ways to find these things, we just need to look for.
- Agree with what Cindy Pierce said. Trespassing is terrible. Anglers could walk the river but don't understand walking on the spawning beds. It's a good policy to have it closed so the fish aren't harassed.
- Encourage agency to look because he thinks there are more fish there and available.

Ross Barkhurst

- Has been asking for information about conservation; redd counts (pHOS and pNOB). Not having this data makes it hard to provide suggestions.
- You are running models, but you don't know what the interim guidance is
- This is too much of a façade.
- We all have a place where we can fish
- We need interim guidance in writing. Please provide the interim guidance motion. Give us the basics

Mark Baltzell– Believe we did provide the basics of the interim guidance in this presentation and there was a news release that provided those talking points from the Commission on the interim guidance for Willapa.

Andy Mitby

- The percentage rates that Lance Gray was talking about have been documented because of the monitoring the commercial fishery has
- Supports removing the jig head rule through Oct 16

Tim Hamilton

- You need to understand the history in Willapa. We started with closed advisory meetings. We had to go through 5 litigations to open these meetings to the public. The agency created a model that didn't show the

commercial fishery. We can't figure out what is going because we have a habit that we can't trust what the dept says. We can't figure out what the commission voted on. Need to sit people down and cooperate. No one can trust this department.

- He asked for 3 spreadsheets not just one. Its not accidental that access to the model was cut off.
- There is no broodstock program in Willapa Bay. Our help was rejected.
- The policy protects against ESA but it's worthless now.
- The department asked the Commission to kill more.
- Help and follow your knowledge because if we don't get this fixed, the only opportunity we have would be to ask NOAA to look in Willapa

Mike Wallace

- Didn't NOAA come in a few years ago and determine that hatchery fish are the same as natural fish? Aren't these fish just naturalized but not natural to Willapa Bay?

James Losee – we know that genetic diversity is low but there is more to it than that. Stray rate is high.

Mike Wallace - Since the gene pool isn't different, can't we just manage in-river?

Andy

- State did that study and there is very little difference between natural and hatchery fish
- We have a letter that says we are not worried about Willapa. The letter says to look at the entire ESU for ESA. Willapa is not on NOAAs radar as far as ESA.

Mark Baltzell

- Reiterated public meeting schedule for everyone
- Let's everyone know that the meeting was recorded and will be posted online to the website tomorrow

Meeting ended at 8 p.m.