

2021 Willapa Bay North of Falcon Public Meeting
Via Zoom Platform
April 12, 2021 6 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Marlene Wagner – Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor Policy Lead

- Welcome opening statements, call logistics and ground rules

Jody Pope – Walks through presentation slides:

- Error in noted at last week's meeting in our modeling. That error was in the calculation in that we were modeling for a 4 bag instead of a 2-bag recreational limit
- We do have limited time to receive additional proposals, keep in mind that we need complete our fishery package to get this data to PFMC on Wednesday
- Models A – E walking through changes from previous proposals
 - Model A is our starting model, NALF (New Abundances, Last year's Fisheries)
 - Model B – Commercial proposal #1
 - Model D- Commercial proposal #2
 - Model C – Staff recommendation to encourage conversation
 - Model E – Commercial proposal #3 with changes to recreational freshwater. Received right before the meeting last week
 - New Model F – Commercial proposal #4, no changes to recreational fisheries from 2020
 - Meets all management objectives for 2021 (20% Chinook, 13, 600 natural coho escapement, 35,400 chum escapement)
 - 29 days of fishing
 - Tangle net early in the season
 - Small mesh from weeks 39 – 48
 - Additional suggestions
 - No salmon fishing anywhere in Willapa bay for 2021
 - Open North, Smith, Bear and Palix rivers for salmon catch and release
 - Model Output Summary
 - Data output for each model run listed above
 - Available online or received it if on distribution list
 - Fishery Descriptions for each model – includes recreational daily limits, mark selective fisheries, retention available and commercial ex-vessel value

Public comment

Steve Gacke

- Implement the jig head prohibition August 1 – October 16 in Naselle River
- Section below hatchery in the Naselle River should remain closed until Oct 16 to collect Chinook eggtake. An early opener for Chinook is ridiculous. A later arriving Chinook by just 2 weeks could eliminate ICH and other issues related to low flows and warm water.
- The proposed 3 fish bag with one female in Nemah is not manageable.
- Support a 2 fish bag with no natural coho harvest bay wide increase hatchery retention by emergency rule if known surpluses occur.
- Consider using surplus chinook to supplement the reduced natural spawning cohort and prohibit Chinook retention above the hatchery in the Naselle River. These fish are not food quality and retained for eggs.

- Do not support the proposal of opening streams to salmon catch and release
- Hope you decide on fisheries package based on what is best for the resource and established by the Commission.

Lance Gray

- Support Model F – the Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) asked us to model at 20% and there doesn't seem to be a way to get close to that at the north end of the bay
- We shouldn't fish natural coho until we see what we have in-season. Then we can open areas. The season runs on what we catch in-season and our fishery will change in-season.
- Try to do something in-season better than we have done. Be ready when the commercial fishery begins in case we can open fisheries.

Tim Hamilton

- Disagrees that the FWC asked the agency to run the fishery at 20%. They said up-to 20%
- Harvest bonus - Idea was that northern fisheries (prior interceptions) would get off the fish to get more back to Willapa Bay. The dumbest thing you would do is to wipe them out.
- Model E shows you where we are headed if we don't stop now. We are going to get down to where there are no fisheries.
- Whatever you do, it is unacceptable to take our largest natural origin spawning Chinook stream and set it at 19.9%. We don't manage to harvest rate; we manage to the purpose in the policy, which is to restore natural origin spawners and avoid ESA.
- He asked us to set another goal, give us 75% coming across the bar.

Ross Barkhurst

- Objects to the fact that we just received a new model just now that we haven't seen before.
- Just heard we are trying to shift the Naselle Chinook run to later. He didn't know that.
- Heard a proposal to close above the dam in Naselle. Each year we close more opportunity for recreational fishery.
- We did make Chinook eggtake in Nemah last year
- The limit of 3 fish in the Nemah would be fine and would limit it to one hen
- 63% of landed chinook were in the Nemah. No time to be cutting back on that.
- The Nemah is the last chance to get a recreational Chinook priority
- Do not support Model F
- Supports Model E or some variation – this would be the only acceptable fishery model

Greg McMillan

- Support Model F – FWC did say you could harvest up to 20%. We are getting some savings from the ocean now.
- The commercial fishery can get shut down daily if needed.
- Feels like this is how we should run the fishery
- Thought that it was established at the FWC meeting that we were on an upward trend.
- Let's create a fishery for everyone not just one user group
- There is nothing in the policy that defines what a policy is. The recreational fishery seems to think it's about harvest. The recreational fishery already has priority in time and area.
- It's only conservation when the commercial fishery is gone.

John Baugher

- Recreational bank fisherman on the Naselle River
- Supports option E
- Push the gillnetters in a little later
- Allow us to fish above Hwy 4 Bridge. Last year there was a lot of fish there with no way to get them.

Tim Hamilton

- Want to shift to coho and chum – When we have problems reach escapement goals, we sometimes a buffer zone. These proposals, except for Model E, all fish to the last fish. It's a disaster. We predict you will undermine the escapement goal of 13,600 for coho. Is this a responsible way to manage fisheries says you will restore natural origin coho? The policy was supposed to correct the way, but it didn't. Do not overlook the fact how many years you have blow coho escapement.
- Think beyond just this year so we don't end up with zero fishing. Back this off now or lose it all in the future

Andy Mitby

- The last option is right. If no one fishes, maybe we make escapement.
- There is nothing exact in fishery science. The guidance from FWC is 20% for Chinook. We are trying to craft the best fishery for both user groups.
- Model F is loaded at the front because we don't have coho available. This is the limiting factor. This model checks all the boxes.
- Staff has said anyone can submit a fishery proposal and the agency will consider any model proposals. Anyone can propose a model, so no need to be offended if they don't like what was proposed.
- 90% of our catch is known by the next morning and if there are more fish available, maybe expand recreational bag limit but to sit there and hold region 6 accountable, don't think that's rational since fisheries management is not an exact science.
- I would caution against a recreational fishery with a 2 fish natural coho limit prior to Sept 1 since the entire coast is fishing mark selective for coho. Shift in effort could be high

Steve Gacke

- The historical problem with coho started in 2015. These folks speaking tonight demanded a 4 fish bag in the recreational fishery and we started to have low returns.
- Stop harvesting wild coho.

Lance Gray

- When we look back at success rate, trying to model fisheries is impossible. We have done well at not hitting the Chinook rate the last few years.
- Model E is so limiting, no alternative gear and no commercial fishery until Oct 1. How do you expect us to get along if you just cut commercial fisheries but keep wanting to add to the recreational fishery?
- No one will say no fishing for anyone, so we meet goals
- The policy states we should conserve and have a viable commercial and recreational fisheries.
- We need to stop fighting over something the state can't control, ie. This model

Mark Baltzell

Reminding folks, we scheduled just an hour for this meeting. Grays Harbor meeting will be after this at 7 p.m.

Tim Hamilton

- We have asked the department to define what priority means and still refuse to insert it into the policy.
- Over 60% of chinook harvest is coming down to the Nemah River. You have eliminated almost all recreational fishing for Chinook.
- This must focus on the policy to restore natural spawners and avoid ESA.
- FWC did not say to fish to 20%.

Lance Gray

- I sell my fish. You know the commercial fishery provides a fish to those who don't have the ability to go recreational fishing.
- It's ridiculous to start an argument over how many people are harvesting. This is the reason why this advisory group doesn't work. Let's move on and stop fighting over every little thing.
- Cutting production at the north end of the bay was a problem and didn't support it but now we are seeing the results.
- We need to raise fish that we all can use and create a policy for everyone.

Andy Mitby

- It's a limited entry fishery. There are going to move recreational fishermen.
- We supply food to those in the population who wants to buy fish.
- This model has us fishing with tangle net in the daytime when it was based on small mesh at night.
- It's easy to take days away from our fishery.

Meeting ended at 7 p.m.