

# Meeting Columbia River policy commitments

## Promoting conservation and sustainable fisheries



In 2020, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted a revised Columbia River Basin Salmon Management Policy. Among other conservation and fishery topics, the policy directs WDFW to:

- Implement a commercial Columbia River license reduction program
- Explore alternative gear types (e.g., pound nets, tangle nets, seines)

Gov. Jay Inslee expressed support for these initiatives in a June 2021 letter, as well as promoting recovery and conservation of wild salmon and sustaining responsible fisheries on the Columbia. To address these needs, WDFW is requesting funding for the following efforts:

### **1. Communication and outreach for Columbia River Fisheries - \$388,000**

Improving communications and providing the public with current, comprehensive information about Columbia River will deepen understanding of fisheries on the river and the vital fish populations that inhabit it.

### **2. Alternative gear development - \$226,000**

WDFW continues to explore commercial fishing gear to serve as alternatives to the gill nets and existing alternative gear (tangle nets) currently used on the river. Additional funding will help further study of gears such as seine nets and pound nets.

### **3. License Reduction - \$2,170,000**

A license reduction program will “buy back” Columbia River-Willapa Bay and Columbia River-Grays Harbor licenses from willing sellers. A \$10,000 fixed-bid and reverse-auction process could purchase back up to 125 licenses.

### **4. Fishery Assessment - \$620,000**

This request would help purchase equipment and tools to improve understanding of stock composition, run timing, and Endangered Species Act impacts on the lower river, as well as more staff time to further improve WDFW’s mainstem fisheries monitoring plan.

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For more information, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/requests-accommodation>.

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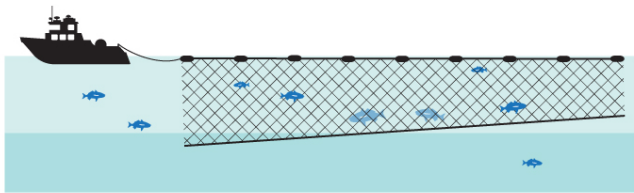
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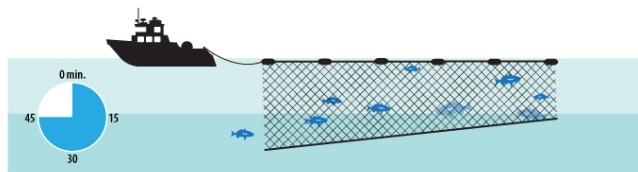
## Exploring alternative commercial gear types



### Gill nets

These large-mesh nets are used in selective fishing, targeting certain stocks or species, and avoiding others by fishing at specific times in specific areas, and by using large mesh sizes that allow smaller-bodied fish like steelhead to pass through the net, while also targeting

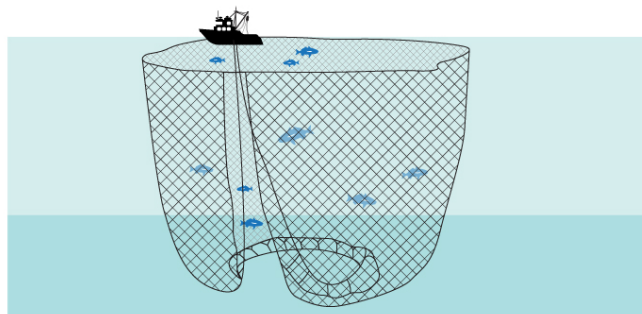
the large-sized Chinook.



### Tangle Nets

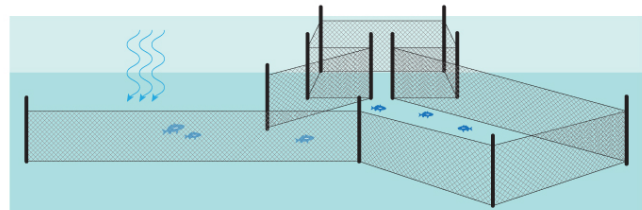
Tangle nets are small-mesh nets that entangle the target fish to minimize injury instead of catching them by their gills. Tangle nets have low encounters of non-target steelhead due to the specific times and areas they are

fished, along with the method of entangling fish. Because of this, it works well for spring Chinook and coho.



### Seine nets

A deep line of small-mesh net is circled around a school of fish and the fish are corralled in the water so they can be sorted. Beach and purse seines generally have low mortality rates when fish that are accidentally caught are released, yet catch a large proportion of the fish in a fishing area.



### Pound nets

A pound net consists of net attached to several pilings driven into the river bottom in a line perpendicular to the river flow. Fish swim along the net to a trap midstream, where they can be sorted and either released or harvested. This gear is still being tested for its potential

commercial use.

## Endangered Species Act (ESA)

The Endangered Species Act limits impacts to certain populations of listed salmon and steelhead. These ESA limits are used to offer fisheries targeted at healthy hatchery and wild populations. The total number of wild fish allowed to be killed under ESA rules is the same regardless of whether a fish is accidentally caught by a recreational or commercial angler. Both fisheries result in impacts to wild fish, and these impacts to ESA-listed species, which WDFW works to minimize, are one of the limiting factors to fisheries, regardless of gear or method. When percentages are allocated to commercial and recreational fisheries, as on the Columbia River, those percentages represent the proportion of ESA impacts for each sector, not the percentage of total fish.