



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

Meeting date:

12/9/2022

Agenda item:

9. Coastal Steelhead Proviso Plan – Briefing, Public Comment, Decision

Presenter(s):

Kelly Cunningham, Fish Program Director

James Losee, Region 6 Fish Program Manager

Toby Harbison, Region 6 Research Scientist

Background summary:

In alignment with existing policies in the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan, the Anadromous Salmon and Steelhead Hatchery Policy C-3624 (2021), and Joint Comanager Hatchery Policy (currently under development), the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan (CSPIP) advances steelhead fishery management in the river systems of Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, and the coastal Olympic Peninsula. WDFW developed the CSPIP in response to the Legislature's 2021-23 operating budget proviso as well as declines in coastal steelhead population viability and associated reductions in angling opportunities. Those declines have highlighted the need to develop adaptive management strategies that provide sustainable angling opportunities and protect coastal steelhead. Given the cultural, economic, and ecological significance of steelhead, Washington's state fish, the CSPIP also provides increased public engagement and transparency around the management process.

Staff recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the associated funding component.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

The Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan (CSPIP) does not constitute new policy, but rather increases WDFW's capacity to meet management objectives outlined in existing policy, including the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan, the Anadromous Salmon and Steelhead Hatchery Policy C-3624 (2021), and Joint Comanager Hatchery Policy (currently under development). The CSPIP and its associated budget request will enhance WDFW's ability to design sustainable coastal steelhead angling opportunities while maintaining long-term steelhead population viability.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation: None

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

The Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group met for 2–3-hour meetings in February, March, April, June, August, September, and November 2022. The Advisors were invited to provide tracked-changes comments directly on the draft CSPIP throughout the process and gave verbal feedback during meetings. WDFW opened the floor to public comment at the end of each advisory group meeting. WDFW also provided a coastal steelhead online public comment portal, which the public could access throughout the process. In November 2022, WDFW posted the draft CSPIP online for public review and comment during a 10-day period.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

The CSPIP outlines a pathway to create Regional Management Plans (RMPs) for the Olympic Peninsula and Southwest Washington steelhead Distinct Population Segments according to guidance in the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan. These RMPs, developed through collaboration between WDFW and tribal comanagers, would build on the CSPIP and include formal Management Strategy Evaluations to assess the ability of a suite of harvest control rules to meet fisheries and conservation objectives. Staff recommends RMPs as the proposed next step in advancing coastal steelhead management, following the implementation of the CSPIP.

Draft motion language:

Post decision communications plan:
