

Fish Committee Meeting Willapa Bay Policy: Alternative 4 January 26, 2023

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Alternative 4 Development

- Commission tasked Department staff with developing an Alternative 4 in September 2022
- Alternative 4 merges productive components of Alternatives 1, 2, and 3
- Informed by the Comprehensive Review, current data, and robust analyses



Overarching Intent of Alternative 4

- The policy defines objectives and adaptive management that will be used to meet desired outcomes
- Provides managers with the flexibility needed to achieve the objectives and outcomes



Alternative 4: Purpose Statement

“The purpose of this Policy is to set management objectives and provide management guidance for natural (in-river) and hatchery production, and recreational and commercial harvest of fall Chinook, coho, and chum salmon populations in Willapa Bay.”

- Includes both natural- and hatchery-origin fish
- Explicitly includes all 3 species of salmon present in Willapa
- Consistent with the intent of all Alternatives 1, 2, and 3



Alternative 4: Policy Objectives

“1. Productive natural-spawning populations that are locally adapted, diverse genetically to maintain adaptability, and occur in densities appropriate for the local environment.”

Relying on local genetic resources that are presumed to be the most adaptable to ecological conditions in Willapa Bay is consistent with both Alternatives 2 & 3 and prioritizes the management of both natural and hatchery populations (and draft Co-manager hatchery policy).



Alternative 4: Policy Objectives

“2. Sustainable fishing levels for both recreational and commercial fisheries that maximize harvest opportunities.”

Consistency with conservation objectives while maximizing harvest opportunities are key tenets in both Alternatives 2 and 3.



Alternative 4: Policy Objectives

“3. Hatchery production is set at levels needed for optimized harvest and suitable for maintenance of natural-origin populations.”

Explicitly considering natural-origin populations while optimizing harvest combines objectives from both Alternatives 2 and 3.



Alternative 4: Policy Objectives

“4. Management actions associated with harvest, hatchery production, and natural-origin escapement adhere to ecosystem-based management principles that consider the risks and benefits to species and habitats within the Willapa Bay system, including vulnerabilities to a changing climate.”

Habitat protection/restoration is a goal of each Alternative, and ecosystem-based fisheries management is the desired pathway for achieving these goals. This is also consistent with the draft Co-manager hatchery policy and Commissioner’s Policy C-3624.



Alternative 4: General Guidance

- Manage hatcheries and harvest to achieve conservation objectives
- Develop performance measures for policy objectives
- Investigate feasibility of enhanced weirs
- Work with partners to protect/restore habitat
- Use processes described in this policy's objectives and Commission hatchery policy (C-3624) to determine production levels



Alternative 4: General Guidance Hatchery Management Specifics

- There can be significant benefits and risks to hatchery production
- A Hatchery Management Plan shall be created for each facility under the Commissioner Policy C-3624 and each hatchery shall operate in accordance with the provisions of its HMP
- HMPs are based on the best available science and contain the essential elements of operational planning that will control aspects such as broodstock collection, mating protocols, and juvenile rearing and release strategies
- HMP provisions reflect a balance genetic and ecological risks to natural origin populations and provide for the ecological and societal benefits of hatchery salmon



Alternative 4: General Guidance Harvest Management Specifics

Fall Chinook salmon (Naselle and Willapa River stocks):

- Manage adaptively for stocks meeting spawner objectives:
 - Meeting escapement goals consistently + preseason forecasts
 - 3 out of 5 years
 - If conditions are not met, manage to impact rate of 20%
- Allow commercial Chinook fisheries in 2M, 2N, 2P, and 2R before Labor Day
- Continue with no Commercial fisheries in 2T and 2U before September 16



Alternative 4: General Guidance

Harvest Management Specifics

Coho and Chum salmon:

- Manage adaptively for stocks meeting spawner objectives:
 - Meeting escapement goals consistently + preseason forecasts
 - 3 out of 5 years
 - If conditions are not met, manage to impact rate of 10%
- Prioritize commercial fishing opportunities during the Coho fishery management period (Sept. 16 - Oct. 14) and outside the Chum conservation management period when necessary (Oct. 15 - 31)
- Provide recreational fishing opportunities



Alternative 4: General Guidance Summary

- Implement mark-selective fisheries and other approaches to benefit conservation
- Conduct Management Strategy Evaluations for harvest control rules
- Allow commercial Chinook fisheries in south bay and maintain north bay for recreational fishing prior to September 16
- HMP development allows for appropriate production levels and is consistent with C-3624



Next steps

- Feedback/Discussion from Fish Committee regarding Alternative 4
- Interim guidance or director delegation for fisheries management & NOF planning for 2023 season





Questions and Discussion