

# 2024 Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor North of Falcon (NOF) Public Meeting

Virtual via Zoom Platform  
April 16, 2024, 6 – 8 p.m.

---

Meeting notes by Barbara McClellan

WDFW Staff: Leah Snyder, Mark Baltzell, Marlene Wagner, Barbara McClellan, Mike Scharpf, Kim Figlar Barnes, Erin Witkop, James Losee, Nick Vanbuskirk, and 5 staff signed in  
Public: 36 individuals virtual via Zoom or phone

Marlene Wagner (WDFW)

- Reviewed meeting guidelines
- Opening statements

Mike Scharpf (WDFW) – Grays Harbor (GH) proposed fisheries review recreational and commercial

Erin Witkop (WDFW) - Willapa Bay (WB) proposed freshwater recreational review

Barbara McClellan – Willapa Bay Commercial proposed fishery review

## **Public Comments**

Willapa Bay

- Present proposal is unacceptable for recreational fishers. Can't get enough fish to the freshwater.
- Remove commercial fishery in south bay in week 35 in all areas or remove days in weeks 34 and 35
- Allocation does not give priority to the freshwater recreational fishery

Grays Harbor

- Queets River – coho projection looks good so why no retention proposed?

Mike Scharpf (WDFW) – Recreational fishery is managed by the Olympia National Park. Fishery is open through Nov and it's the first two fish you catch is allowed.

Grays Harbor

- Why are you not being as aggressive with the no bait rule in Chehalis and Satsop?
- How does the December coho fishery look?

Mike Scharpf (WDFW) –

- No data to show savings using no bait in the Chehalis River.
- Don't know what is going to happen for the Dec fisheries. Have had conversations with co-manager about this fishery.

Grays Harbor

- Clearwater River – 2 adults, release Chinook – any concern for additional effort when other systems are going to be 1 fish limit?

Mike Scharpf (WDFW) – Not a huge concern, CRC data shows minimal effort in the past but looking to find funds to support monitoring.

## Grays Harbor

- Jig restriction in Westport from last year – was the jig restriction effective last year?  
Mike Scharpf (WDFW) – No data to know how effective it was.  
James Losee (WDFW) – Heard antidotally that it was somewhat effective.  
Officer Dielman (WDFW) – Stated he look into this as he does not work this fishery

## Willapa Bay

- Naselle River – abundance of natural coho, will an e-reg be issued after Nov 15 to allow retention of natural coho?

Erin Witkop (WDFW) – Forecasts are variable, there is a trend in spawner surveys that is below escapement, so this was an effort to try to reverse the low escapement. We will consider an e-reg in season if we think fish are available.

- Don't know how effective the new weir will be. It's a big deal for the upriver landowners.
- Already submitted several gear changes for the Naselle River to deal with snagging – don't see any of these in what was presented. What is the status of these gear changes such as eliminating jigs from Aug 1 - Oct 15?

Erin Witkop (WDFW) – Agree there were lots of conversations about the gear changes – Came down to tough conversations with our Director and couldn't get full support to move forward this year with these changes.

Kelly Cunningham (WDFW) – These changes were seriously considered during this process, but he has discomfort with these suggested rules. It was his decision not to move forward with the changes. We already have an anti-snagging rule in place. The foul hooked change is problematic. Jig bans have been used in areas with chronic snagging on a much larger scale. It is more prevalent in other areas where we have conservation concerns.

- Had suggested 'No fishing from a floating device change' – boats have impact to the landowner up near the Bighill Bridge.

Kelly Cunningham (WDFW) – Wasn't convinced it would solve the problem. Taking people out of boats is a big deal.

## Grays Harbor

- GH Commercial fishery will not be allowed to retain Chinook, has a 45-minute soak time, and recovery boxes will be required.
- Why did you remove the 4-3 provision from the policy for the non-treaty commercial fishery?

Mike Scharpf (WDFW) – GH Salmon Management Policy expired at the end of 2023.

The Treaty schedule given to us is an aggressive commercial schedule, which didn't provide a lot of room for our non-treaty commercial fishery. The non-treaty schedule is proposed at the front of the week and there are no days scheduled for the weekend at the end of the week.

## Willapa Bay

- This NOF process had more discussions and open conversations than expected, happy with this.
- Forks Creek Hatchery releases impact the recreational fishery

## Willapa Bay

- Why didn't you increase the limit to 3 adults, with 1 hen on the Nemah? Why can't we try this? Should help eggtake and have less people taking hens.
- Aug 25 -31 for commercial fishery – can't get recreational priority with these days scheduled. Cancel these days especially 2N to give fish to the Nemah.

Marlene Wagner (WDFW) – 4500 Chinook surplus last year. This proposal does provide good recreational fishery and provides opportunity to everyone.

## Willapa Bay

- What is the impact rate for natural Chinook in the policy?  
Marlene Wagner (WDFW) – Policy states not to exceed 20% natural origin Chinook

- Don't understand why there is a reluctance to model to the full 20%? We manage in-season and are able to make changes in-season. There is no issue with grossly underharvesting compared to the reaction when we slightly overharvest?

Marlene Wagner (WDFW) – It's a delicate balance, we do our best to accommodate everyone. Will continue to have in-season updates as we have in the past.

## Willapa Bay

- Things won't likely be changing much. This meeting is to learn what we will be doing.
- Disappointed with how we are doing things especially with communication.
- Commercial fleets is getting smaller.
- The modeled commercial fishery provided to you showed 18.5% natural origin Chinook impacts, which is the same as last year but this year it wasn't good enough.
- The goal should be to get as many hatchery fish as you can so it's disappointing that there will be a lot of coho surplus this year.
- Has concerns over the reliability of the spawner survey work

Marlene Wagner (WDFW) - Proud of the survey work we do

Kelly Cunningham (WDFW) – Meeting to talk tomorrow in Montesano

## Willapa Bay

- In 2023, Nemah Hatchery did not make Chinook broodstock.
- If you put the days in 2N in weeks 34, 35 and 37, Nemah Hatchery will not make egg take again. How are you going to make sure the hatchery will make broodstock with this schedule? It's in our best interest to back off on fishing days.

Marlene Wagner (WDFW) – We do our best to provide the opportunity and make hatchery broodstock.

James Losee (WDFW) – The proposal leads us to the expectation to meet these goals this season. Plan is to monitor and meet the objectives.

## Grays Harbor

- Provide news release to notify the public for enacting any rule changes due to low flows prior to the rule change happening.
- How are we keeping the tribe accountable especially if we close and the tribe keeps fishing?  
James Losee (WDFW) – Low flows will be a concern again this year and we already have check-ins planned with co-manager to discuss these issues for the fall season.  
Mike Scharpf (WDFW) – Will make more of an effort to share information via the website.

## Willapa Bay

- Why are we managing to river specific goals for coho?  
James Losee (WDFW) – We noticed that where fisheries are popular, we are good are removing wild fish as well as hatchery fish, but the result is that we are not meeting local escapement goals. Anglers will still be able to keep the same adult limit of fish, but it will just be marked fish only.

## Willapa Bay

- Requested to change the date on barbless hook requirement to protect wild Chinook. Chinook are not in the river in November. Why didn't this rule get modified? Change the rule to November 1 or submit an ereg in-season.

James Losee (WDFW) – We get lots of rule suggestions, happy to have those conversations about any rules.  
Erin Witkop (WDFW) – Intent was to address bad behavior

#### Grays Harbor

- Fishing in-common – tribe doesn't want to do that?
- True late coho is around late Dec and January.

Mike Scharpf (WDFW) – In-common means both treaty and non-treaty fishing at the same time in the same area, and yes the tribe does not want to do that. Have seen an increase in late coho since 2022.

#### Willapa Bay

- Fall Chinook programs – hatchery success SARs are terrible and should be a priority. It would solve a lot of the issues if you figure out how to improve these. What are you doing to improve your hatchery programs?

James Losee (WDFW) – All programs provide hatchery opportunities, and we will continue to try to maximize our hatchery programs.

#### Marlene Wagner (WDFW)

- The public comment portal is currently closed until we file the CR-102 but you can submit comments via our individual harbor emails until that filing occurs.

Meeting adjourned at 7:44 pm