

Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: 15 May 2025

Agenda item: Fishing Closure near WSDOT Ferry Terminals

Presenter(s): Kirt Hughes, Fish Management Division Manager, Fish Program

Background summary:

The Department seeks to improve public and worker safety by prohibiting crab and shrimp fishing gear and commercial purse seine fishing and gillnetting near all ferry terminals managed by the Washington state department of transportation (WSDOT). In addition to addressing safety and worker safety concerns, the commercial and recreational fishing equipment associated with these activities has historically caused significant and costly annual damage to WSDOT ferries operating in Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands. WSDOT has been unsuccessful in discouraging the public from commercially or recreationally fishing in these areas with public announcements, radio notices and other outreach.

There are 19 ferry terminals in Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands managed by the WSDOT. These ferry routes and these WSDOT vessels are vital to transportation and commerce in the State. These ferries serve island communities which are not accessible via our roadway systems. Ferries are particularly susceptible to damage caused by these fishing gear-types when approaching and departing their terminal. The closures would prohibit certain fishing activities that use these types of fishing gear within 400 yards straight out from the end of the ferry terminal dock and 100 yards on each side of the terminal. These gears include recreational and commercial crab and shrimp pot gear and commercial purse seine and gillnet gear.

Staff recommendation: Complete the following projects

Delegate rule-making authority to the Director.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

The limited scope of these closed areas is not expected to substantively impact fishing opportunity. Formally closing these areas to the use of these fishing gears provides needed authority for WDFW police to actively remove pot gear and to require commercial vessels fishing these gears to move away from the closed areas.

From a WSDOT perspective, these areas will be far less likely to have gear which could impact state ferries.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

The proposed rule change would not have any fiscal impact related to WDFW.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Department staff will follow rule making procedures under the APA with notice to the public as with any rule making.

Additionally, on March 4th, 2025, WDFW and WSDOT staff jointly held a public meeting to present the proposed rule and rationale. This virtual public meeting was attended by ten members of the public. In response to the CR101 posting we have received six comments in support, one opposed, and one neutral.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Delegate rule-making authority to the Director

Draft motion language:

In support of the recommendation of the Fish Committee, I move to delegate rule-making

authority to the Director for the purpose of undertaking rule making to create fishing closures for certain gear-types around ferry terminal in Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands.

Post decision communications plan:

Inform key commercial stakeholders of changes to the WAC.

Include information regarding these closure in future fishing rules pamphlets and on the FishWA app.

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