

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group
Meeting #3 Summary
Monday, April 28, 2022
Time: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Attendees

Advisory Group Members

Robert “Bob” Kratzer	WA State Guides Association
Caleb Hitzfield	Caleb Hitzfield Fly Fishing
Chris Ringlee	Private angler
Geoff McMichael	Mainstem Fish Research, LLC
Jason Rolfe	The Flyfish Journal
Jessica Helsley	Wild Salmon Center
Jonathan Stumpf	Trout Unlimited
Lee Geist	Private angler
Luke Probasco	Private angler
Mara Zimmerman	Coast Salmon Partnership
Rich Simms	Wild Steelhead Coalition
Roy Morris	Retired fishing guide

Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Staff

Toby Harbison	WDFW, Program Manager for Region 6
James Losee	WDFW
Eryn Couch	WDFW
Amy Edwards	WDFW

Facilitation Team

Greer Maier	Triangle Associates, Facilitator
Olivia Smith	Triangle Associates, Facilitation Support

Meeting Materials

- [April 28 YouTube Meeting Recording](#)
- [April 28 Meeting Agenda](#)
- [March 21 Meeting Summary](#)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation and Fisheries Regulations Sections](#)

Action Items

<i>Action Items</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Homework: Choose a coastal river and consider how the fisheries regulations discussed might impact that river, both in terms of biology and socioeconomics. Are there alternative methods the Department should consider when determining fisheries regulations? Come to the next meeting prepared to discuss.	Advisory Group Members	June Advisory Group meeting <i>(date TBD on doodle poll)</i>
Review and provide edits in track changes or comment bubbles to the Draft Monitoring & Evaluation and Fishing Regulations Sections. Send comments to Toby Harbison and Triangle with initials in the file name. Triangle will post all comments to the SharePoint site.	Advisory Group Members	2 weeks prior to June Advisory Group meeting <i>(date TBD on doodle poll)</i>
Incorporate Advisory Group feedback and produce a revised/track-changed draft and response to comment matrix (by theme) for Advisory Group members to review ahead of meetings going forward.	WDFW	1 week prior to June Advisory Group meeting <i>(date TBD on doodle poll)</i>
Draft a meeting summary and schedule next meeting (see below).	Triangle Associates	May 9th

Welcome and Introductions

The facilitator, Greer Maier with Triangle Associates (Triangle), gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda and objectives before leading a brief roll call. James Losee, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) welcomed meeting attendees and thanked everyone for joining. James then gave an overview of the scope and ground rules.

The facilitator encouraged the group to reach out to her with any technical difficulties or process recommendations. Public comments will now be added to the group's SharePoint site, and comments from Advisory Group members will also be added to the SharePoint site under the specific parts of the draft plan.

Topics of Interest (Background Communications, Status)

Toby Harbison, WDFW, reviewed feedback from Advisory Group members on the Background, Communications, and Regime Classification Approach sections to the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan. She provided a list of themes related to the feedback she received. Toby encouraged Advisory Group members to share feedback in any capacity that is manageable. Toby's presentation was followed by a group discussion on the review process and the three draft sections of the plan.

Questions and Discussion:

- There was a brief discussion on the review process and how WDFW will respond to

Advisory Group feedback. Advisory Group members requested that WDFW send an updated draft the Advisory Group members ahead of the next meeting, indicating what edits were made. WDFW staff agreed to use tracked changes to show the original text and what was changed and send that to Advisory Group members. This was added as an action item.

- Bob Kratzer commented on the importance of identifying data and budget needs before developing a detailed plan.
- Luke Probasco shared the need to set expectations of the Advisory Group and the need to take a holistic approach to fishery impacts beyond just anglers.
- Rich Simms expressed the importance of identifying near-term actions to address data gaps and reduce impacts on the fish.
- Roy Morris emphasized the importance of meeting or exceeding escapement goals.
- Jessica Helsley commented on the importance of addressing escapement and abundance to focus on rebuilding populations for the long-term, while considering distribution and run times (viable salmonid population (VSP) parameters).
- James Losee, WDFW, rejected Advisory Group concerns about putting energy into a plan that will ultimately not be used. He emphasized how the actions in the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan make it powerful. The WDFW team shared how they are working to make the Plan adaptable to incorporate new information as it becomes available.
- Caleb Hitzfeld emphasized the importance of the language used in the Plan to accurately convey the status of the fisheries.
- There was a request to share feedback in bullet points for the public to see what input Advisory Group members are providing.

James Losee, WDFW, explained how the Advisory Group meetings are structured with the first half of the meetings dedicated to reviewing Advisory Group feedback to sections of the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan from the last round of input, and the second half of the meetings are dedicated to reviewing new criteria.

The facilitator shared Toby Harbison will be sending out new draft sections for each meeting and encouraged Advisory Group members to share any topics they would like added to meeting agendas.

Introduce Monitoring and Evaluation Section

Toby Harbison, WDFW, gave an overview of the current structure for the Coastal Steelhead

Proviso Implementation Plan and highlighted the importance of the plan framework as it will be applied to basin-specific plans to follow. Toby then explained how each of the five sections (monitoring & evaluation, fisheries regulations, hatcheries, habitat, and socioeconomics) will include an assessment of methodologies currently used, how they can be expanded, and data management procedures. Toby added that WDFW is working on improving creel surveys to improve certainty and manage with greater precision.

Amy Edwards, WDFW, gave a presentation on creel monitoring of recreational winter steelhead fisheries including the purpose, how they are implemented, challenges, what results can produce, and next steps for creel monitoring statewide.

Questions and Discussion:

- Rich Simms shared how there was a punch card system 25 to 30 years ago that allowed anglers to record released fish. Amy Edwards responded she is not familiar with this tool, but WDFW is working to move to an electronic system. A suggestion was made to include the electronic punch cards to the WDFW app.
- Bob Kratzer suggested reintroducing the punch card process for private anglers to record releases and emphasized how it would be easier for people to return the cards in person through a box rather than mailing. Bob added how the electronic app only records catch and kill not catch and release. A suggestion was made to install kiosks at boat ramps for punch cards to be submitted.
- There was a brief discussion on how to increase angler participation.
- Rich Simms commented on how anglers can be reluctant to share where they are catching fish on river.
- Roy Morris expressed appreciation for the quality of data and analysis and asked about integrating tribal data into the matrix. Amy Edwards responded WDFW is looking at their impact through creel data and explained how Tribes also record their catch. James Losee added that Tribal fishing data (ex. Run timing, spawning counts) is recorded and shared with WDFW weekly and WDFW is working to better share data with Tribes.
- Roy Morris emphasized the importance of collaborative data collection across Tribes, state agencies, and NGOs for decision-making.
- Geoff McMichael expressed concern with seasons being closed prematurely due to people reporting catches and recording bias.

James Losee shared how angler's total catch estimates will inform catch patterns and help WDFW improve the validation of fisheries. James explained how creel surveys can help identify trends or bias related to run sizes and seasons but reiterated that they are largely dependent on public participation.

Fisheries Regulations Section

Toby Harbison, WDFW, reviewed the fisheries regulations section and explained how WDFW will be taking an adaptive management approach. Toby then explained the proposed regime classification (maintenance, transitional, and conservative focus) and three-step regulation process (forecasting, pre-season planning, and in-season tools) emphasizing that the overall goal is transparency.

Questions and Discussion

- In response to a question from Jason Rolfe about how forecasting would be used, James Losee responded WDFW designs regulations that protect a full suite of spawners, but that only certain parts of watersheds receive spawners.
- There was a brief discussion about including language on run timing and distribution to convey basic management decisions.
- Caleb Hitzfield suggested setting a designated set of rules (e.g. rules if forecasting run size is over 20%, over 30%, etc.) rather than creating rules each year. Toby Harbison explained how the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan will provide more transparency on the plans within multiple regimes farther in advance and that final decisions will not be made until the pre-season planning process starts.
- Rich Simms reiterated the request for a fourth column labeled “exceeding escapement” and expressed concerns with triggering the full fishery at escapement. Rich added how regulations can be more liberal if the status is exceeding escapement. Toby responded that even if above escapement, WDFW will be looking at allowable impacts and managing a fishery to that specific number of fish.
- Bob Kratzer commented on the impacts the fishery is experiencing beyond private anglers and suggested developing unique regulations by area (ex. Cannot fish by boat in this section).

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The facilitator thanked the Advisory Group for their engagement and thoughtful questions. A meeting date for June will be chosen based on results of the Doodle poll and a meeting invite will follow.

Toby then reviewed the homework assignment for this group which is to: *“Choose a coastal river and consider how the fisheries regulations discussed might impact that river, both in terms of biology and socioeconomics. Are there alternative methods the Department should consider when determining fisheries regulations? Come to the next meeting prepared to discuss.”* This was added as an action item.

Public Comments:

- Brian McLachlan noted that the public doesn’t have access to the SharePoint site and

draft documents. If possible, he would like access to these drafts to provide detailed comments. Or be given significant time at the end of process to provide the public time to go through the sections and provide comments. Brian noted that he sees reluctance to change and suggested WDFW put out sections or ideas for public comment along the way. When he looked at the status classification approach and mgmt. regime he wasn't a fan. He stated he couldn't see how it fit into the frameworks. Brian suggested the framework for regulations and habitat monitoring and evaluation shouldn't be adjusted yearly to avoid confusion. His other concern was the 90% certainty figure included in last month's meeting. He noted that it is a policy call about how much certainty you need, and he was curious how the 90% certainty figure would work in management with the variability in fish abundance. Determining MSY, escapement goals, and forecasting impacts can be difficult, Brian suggesting looking at the Skagit and at the Umpqua assessment for steelhead and emphasized getting creel surveys that we can have confidence in. Roy Morris shared he has the Dick Berges report.

- Ray (no last name provided)- In addition to regulating the sport fisheries what about managing predation by Cormorants, seal, and sea lions? Toby Harbison responded this plan is focused on fisheries regulation and predation is not a focus.
- Jeff Brazda- Is the use of SONAR off the table as a monitoring tool, and if so, why? What would a SONAR Budget look like?
- Matthew Cullum- Has there been any talk about assisting native fish populations by implementing broodstock programs with volunteer angler participation?
- Greg Fitz- In the "regimes" for potential seasons, is there a plan to provide the context of recent years. For example, if a river is projected to make escapement, but has missed it frequently in the previous decade (like many on the coast) is there a mechanism to factor that fragile status into potential season planning? Also: What are the next steps needed to improve the modeling/forecasting for expected returns. It was mentioned today but wondering how soon (or which elements) might be prioritized. Worried we are trapped in a cycle of chronic over-exploitation.
- Ravae O'Leary- Asked for response from WDFW about the suggestion to let the public see draft sections. James Losee, WDFW stated that there is a public comment period planned prior to going to Commission. He encouraged people from the public who want to have influence, reach out to advisors to convey their input. The role of the Advisory Group is to bring in the public's perspectives. Considering edits from the public at large would bog down the process and make it difficult to meet deadlines. He reiterated that the current process is an efficient use of WDFW team.
- Justin (no last name given)- Suggested WDFW use the same app used by guides and make it so public can use it.

The meeting officially adjourned at 6:10 p.m. PST.