

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY DECISION

POLICY TITLE: Willapa Bay Salmon Management **POLICY NUMBER:** C-XXXX-

Cancels or
Supersedes: NA

Effective Date: March 1, 2015
Termination Date: December 31, 2023

See Also: Policies C-3608, C-3619

Approved _____[date]
by: _____Chair
Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

Purpose

The objective of this policy is to achieve the conservation and restoration of wild salmon in Willapa Bay and avoid ESA designation of any salmon species. Where consistent with this conservation objective, the policy also seeks to maintain or enhance the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry in the state, provide the public with outdoor recreational experiences, and a fair distribution of fishing opportunities throughout the Willapa Bay Basin. Enhanced transparency, information sharing, and improved technical rigor of fishery management are needed to restore and maintain public trust and support for management of Willapa Bay salmon fisheries.

Definition and Intent

This policy sets a general management direction and provides guidance for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) management of all Pacific salmon returning to the Willapa Bay Basin. The Willapa Bay Basin is defined as Willapa Bay and its freshwater tributaries.

General Policy Statement

This policy provides a cohesive set of principles and guidance to promote the conservation of wild salmon and steelhead and improve the Department's management of salmon in the Willapa Bay Basin. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) recognizes that management decisions must be informed by fishery monitoring (biological and economic), and that innovation and adaptive management will be necessary to achieve the stated purpose of this policy. By improving communication, information sharing, and transparency, the Department shall promote improved public support for management of Willapa Bay salmon fisheries.

State commercial and recreational fisheries will need to increasingly focus on the harvest of abundant hatchery fish. Mark-selective fisheries are a tool that permits the harvest of abundant hatchery fish while reducing impacts on wild stocks needing protection. As a general policy, the Department shall implement mark-selective salmon fisheries, unless the wild populations substantially affected by the fishery are meeting spawner (e.g., escapement goal) and broodstock management objectives. In addition, the Department may consider

avoidance, alternative gears, or other selective fishing concepts along with other management approaches provided they are as or more effective than a mark-selective fishery in achieving spawner and broodstock management objectives.

Fishery and hatchery management measures should be implemented as part of an “all-H” strategy that integrates hatchery, harvest, and habitat systems. Although the policy focuses on fishery management, this policy in no way diminishes the significance of habitat protection and restoration.

Guiding Principles

The Department shall apply the following principles in the management of salmon in the Willapa Bay Basin:

- 1) Prioritize the restoration and conservation of wild salmon through a comprehensive, cohesive, and progressive series of fishery, hatchery, and habitat actions.
- 2) Work with our partners (including Regional Fishery Enhancement Groups, nonprofit organizations, the public and Lead Entities) to protect and restore habitat productivity.
- 3) Implement improved broodstock management (including selective removal of hatchery fish) to reduce the genetic and ecological impacts of hatchery fish and improve the fitness and viability of salmon produced from Willapa Bay rivers (see Hatchery and Fishery Reform Policy C-3619). Achieve Hatchery Scientific Review Group broodstock management standards for Coho and Chum salmon by 2015, and work toward a goal of achieving standards for Chinook salmon by 2020.
- 4) Investigate and promote the development and implementation of alternative selective gear. The development of alternative selective gear may provide an opportunity to target fishery harvests on abundant hatchery fish stocks, reduce the number of hatchery-origin fish in natural spawning areas, limit mortalities on non-target species and stocks, and provide commercial fishing opportunities.
- 5) Work through the Pacific Salmon Commission to promote the conservation of Willapa Bay salmon and, in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, pursue the implementation of fishery management actions necessary to achieve agreed conservation objectives.
- 6) Within the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) process, support management measures that promote the attainment of Willapa Bay conservation objectives consistent with the Council’s Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
- 7) Monitoring, sampling, and enforcement programs will adequately account for species and population impacts (landed catch and incidental fishing mortality) of all recreational and commercial fisheries and ensure compliance with state regulations.

- 8) If it becomes apparent that a scheduled fishery will exceed its preseason catch expectation, and the overage will put at risk the attainment of conservation objectives, the Department shall implement in-season management actions that are projected to enhance the effectiveness of fishery management relative to the attainment of the conservation objectives and impact sharing in the preseason fishery plan.
- 9) Salmon management will be timely, well documented, transparent, well-communicated, and accountable. The Department shall strive to make ongoing improvements in the transparency of fishery management and for effective public involvement. These shall include: a) clearly describing management objectives in a document available to the public prior to the initiation of the preseason planning process; b) enhancing opportunities for public engagement during the preseason fishery planning process; c) communicating in-season information and management actions to advisors and the public; and d) striving to improve communication with the public regarding co-management issues that are under discussion.
- 10) Seek to improve fishery management and technical tools through improved fishery monitoring, the development of new tools, and rigorous assessment of fishery models and parameters.
- 11) When a mark-selective fishery occurs, the mark-selective fishery shall be implemented, monitored, and enforced in a manner designed to achieve the anticipated conservation benefits.

Fishery and Species-Specific Guidance

Subject to the provisions of the Adaptive Management section, the following fishery-and species-specific sections describe the presumptive path for achieving conservation objectives and a fair sharing of harvestable fish.

Fall Chinook Salmon: Alternative A (Willapa Primary Population, Aggressive Rebuilding)

Subject to the adaptive management provisions of this policy, the Department will manage fall Chinook salmon fisheries and hatchery programs consistent with the Guiding Principles and the following additional guidance:

- 1) Fishery Management Objectives. The fishery management objectives for fall Chinook salmon, in priority order, are to:
 - a) Achieve spawner goals for natural-origin Chinook and hatchery reform broodstock objectives through a three cycle (10-15 years) rebuilding program;
 - b) Prioritize recreational fishing opportunities for Chinook salmon and in areas 2T and 2U during the Chinook salmon management period (through Sept. 15); and
 - c) Provide opportunities for commercial fisheries within the remaining available fishery impacts.

- 2) Fishery Management in Transition Period (2015 - 2017). To facilitate a transition to the Willapa River as the primary Chinook salmon population, fisheries during the transition period will be managed with the following intent:

Option A:

- a) Commercial and recreational fisheries shall be structured to limit the harvest of natural-origin Willapa Fall Chinook and maximize the selective harvest of hatchery-origin Chinook. Fishery impacts on natural-origin Willapa Fall Chinook shall not exceed 19%.
- b) No commercial Chinook salmon fisheries shall occur in Area 2T prior to Labor Day.
- c) Commercial fisheries in Area 2T after Labor Day but before Sept. 16 shall use mark-selective fishing gear (4.5" maximum mesh tangle net) and recovery boxes.
- d) The following schedule will guide fishery implementation in areas 2M, 2N, and 2U:

Release Mortality Rate	Earliest Fishery Opening
Low (e.g., hook and line, beach seine, purse seine, trap)	Consistent with Ocean Fishery Opening
Moderate (e.g., tangle net)	August 15
High (e.g., gill net)	After Labor Day

Option B:

- a) No commercial Chinook fisheries shall occur in areas 2T and 2U prior to Labor Day. Commercial fisheries in areas 2T and 2U after Labor Day but before Sept. 16 shall use mark-selective fishing gear (4.5" maximum mesh tangle net) and recovery boxes.
 - b) The impact rate on Willapa River natural-origin fall Chinook in Willapa Bay fisheries shall not exceed 19%. Within this impact rate cap, the priority shall be to maintain a full season of recreational fisheries for Chinook salmon in the Willapa Bay region.
- 3) Fishery Management After 2017. Fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin during the Chinook salmon management period (prior to September 16) will be managed with the intent of:
- a) Limiting the fishery impact rate on Willapa River natural-origin fall Chinook to no more than 9.2%.
 - b) Within the 9.2% impact limit, provide for a full recreational fishing season (anticipated impact rate of ~3.2%).
 - c) Commercial fisheries may occur within the remaining impacts and with the following progressive series of openings:
 - no earlier than the day after Labor Day in areas 2R and 2M;
 - no earlier than Sept. 9 in Area 2N.
 - d) No commercial fisheries shall occur within areas 2T and 2U prior to Sept. 16.
- 4) Hatchery Production. Within budgetary constraints, and at the earliest feasible date, the Department shall seek to implement the following hatchery production of fall Chinook salmon:
- 3.30 million at Naselle Hatchery
 - 3.30 million at Nemah Hatchery
 - 0.35 million at Forks Creek Hatchery
- 5) Enhanced Hatchery Production. The Department shall work with our partners to secure resources to increase production of fall Chinook salmon at Naselle Hatchery by an additional 2.7 million subyearlings.

Fall Chinook Salmon: Alternative B (Willapa Primary Population, Rapid Rebuilding)

Subject to the adaptive management provisions of this policy, the Department will manage fall Chinook salmon fisheries and hatchery programs consistent with the Guiding Principles and the following additional guidance:

- 1) Fishery Management Objectives. The fishery management objectives for fall Chinook salmon, in priority order, are to:
 - a. Achieve spawner goals for natural-origin Chinook and hatchery reform broodstock objectives through a four cycle (16-21 years) rebuilding program;
 - b. Prioritize recreational fishing opportunities for Chinook salmon and for recreational fishing in areas 2T and 2U during the Chinook salmon management period (through Sept. 15); and
 - c. Provide opportunities for commercial fisheries within the remaining available fishery impacts.

- 2) Fishery Management in Transition Period (2015 - 2017). To facilitate a transition to the Willapa River as the primary Chinook salmon population, fisheries during the transition period will be managed with the following intent:

Option A:

- a) Commercial and recreational fisheries shall be structured to limit the harvest of natural-origin Willapa Fall Chinook and maximize the selective harvest of hatchery-origin Chinook. Fishery impacts on natural-origin Willapa Fall Chinook shall not exceed 21.5%.
- b) No commercial Chinook salmon fisheries shall occur in Area 2T prior to Labor Day.
- c) Commercial fisheries in Area 2T after Labor Day but before Sept. 16 shall use mark-selective fishing gear (4.5" maximum mesh tangle net) and recovery boxes.
- d) The following schedule will guide fishery implementation in areas 2M, 2N, and 2U:

Release Mortality Rate	Earliest Fishery Opening
Low (e.g., hook and line, beach seine, purse seine, trap)	Consistent with Ocean Fishery Opening
Moderate (e.g., tangle net)	August 15
High (e.g., gill net)	After Labor Day

Option B:

- a) No commercial Chinook fisheries shall occur in areas 2T and 2U prior to Labor Day. Commercial fisheries in areas 2T and 2U after Labor Day but before Sept. 16 shall use mark-selective fishing gear (4.5" maximum mesh tangle net) and recovery boxes.
 - b) The impact rate on Willapa River natural-origin fall Chinook in Willapa Bay fisheries shall not exceed 21.5%. Within this impact rate cap, the priority shall be to maintain a full season of recreational fisheries for Chinook salmon in the Willapa Bay region.
- 3) Fishery Management After 2017. Fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin during the Chinook salmon management period (prior to September 16) will be managed with the intent of:
- a) Limiting the fishery impact rate on Willapa River natural-origin fall Chinook to no more than 14%.
 - b) Within the 14% impact limit, provide for a full recreational fishing season (anticipated impact rate of ~3.2%).
 - c) Commercial fisheries may occur within the remaining impacts and with the following progressive series of openings:
 - no earlier than the day after Labor Day in areas 2R and 2M; and
 - no earlier than Sept. 9 in Area 2N.
 - d) No commercial fisheries shall occur within areas 2T and 2U prior to Sept. 16.
- 4) Hatchery Production. Within budgetary constraints, and at the earliest feasible date, the Department shall seek to implement the following hatchery production of fall Chinook salmon:
- 3.30 million at Naselle Hatchery
 - 3.30 million at Nemah Hatchery
 - 0.35 million at Forks Creek Hatchery
- 5) Enhanced Hatchery Production. The Department shall work with our partners to secure resources to increase production of fall Chinook salmon at Naselle Hatchery by an additional 2.7 million subyearlings.

Fall Chinook Salmon: Alternative C (Naselle Primary Population, Rapid Rebuilding)

Subject to the adaptive management provisions of this policy, the Department will manage fall Chinook salmon fisheries and hatchery programs consistent with the Guiding Principles and the following additional guidance:

- 1) Fishery Management Objectives. The fishery management objectives for fall Chinook salmon, in priority order, are to:
 - a) Achieve spawner goals for natural-origin Chinook and hatchery reform broodstock objectives through a four cycle (16-21 years) rebuilding program;
 - b) Prioritize recreational fishing opportunities for Chinook salmon and for recreational fishing in areas 2T and 2U during the Chinook salmon management period (through Sept. 15); and
 - c) Provide opportunities for commercial fisheries within the remaining available fishery impacts.

- 2) Fishery Management. Fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin during the Chinook salmon management period (prior to September 16) will be managed with the intent of:
 - a) Limiting the fishery impact rate on Naselle River natural-origin fall Chinook to no more than 13.7%.
 - b) Within the 13.7% impact limit, provide for a full recreational fishing season (anticipated impact rate of ~4.2%).
 - c) Commercial fisheries may occur within the remaining impacts and no earlier than the day after Labor Day in areas 2U and 2N.

- 3) Hatchery Production. Within budgetary constraints, the Department shall seek to implement the following hatchery production of fall Chinook salmon:
 - 0.50 million at Naselle Hatchery
 - 3.30 million at Nemah Hatchery
 - 3.20 million at Forks Creek Hatchery

Coho Salmon

Subject to the adaptive management provisions of this policy, the Department will manage Coho salmon fisheries and hatchery programs consistent with the Guiding Principles and the following objectives:

- 1) The fishery management objectives for Coho salmon, in priority order, are to:
 - a) Achieve the aggregate spawner goal for natural-origin Coho and hatchery reform broodstock objectives (see bullet 2);
 - b) Prioritize commercial fishing opportunities during the Coho fishery management period (Sept. 15 through Oct. 14); and
 - c) Provide recreational fishing opportunities.
- 2) Fisheries will be managed with the intent of achieving the aggregate spawner goal for Willapa Bay natural-origin Coho salmon. When the pre-season forecast of natural-origin adult Coho is less than the aggregate goal, or less than 10% higher than the aggregate goal, fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin will be scheduled to result in an impact of no more than 10% of the adult return.
- 3) Hatchery programs and fisheries will be managed to achieve watershed-specific broodstock management standards.

Chum Salmon

Subject to the adaptive management provisions of this policy, the Department will manage Chum salmon fisheries and hatchery programs consistent with the Guiding Principles and the following objectives:

- 1) The fishery management objectives for Chum salmon, in priority order, are to:
 - a) achieve the aggregate goal for naturally spawning Chum and meet hatchery reform broodstock objectives (see bullets 2 and 3);
 - b) prioritize commercial fishing opportunities during the Chum fishery management period (October 15 through October 31); and
 - c) provide recreational fishing opportunities.
- 2) Fisheries will be managed with the intent of achieving the aggregate goal for Willapa Bay naturally spawning Chum salmon. Until the spawner goal is achieved, the maximum fishery impact shall not exceed a 10% harvest rate and no commercial fisheries will occur in the period from October 15-31. If the aggregate goal has been achieved, but the pre-season forecast of adult Chum is less than the aggregate goal, or less than 10% higher than the aggregate goal, fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin will be scheduled to result in an impact of no more than 10% of the adult return.
- 3) The Department shall evaluate opportunities to increase hatchery production of Chum salmon. If Chum salmon hatchery production is enhanced, beginning as early as 2018,

fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin may be implemented with a fishery impact limit of no more than 33% of the natural-origin Chum salmon return.

Adaptive Management

The Commission recognizes that adaptive management will be essential to achieve the purpose of this policy. Department staff may implement actions to manage adaptively to achieve the objectives of this policy and will coordinate with the Commission, as needed, in order to implement corrective actions. Components of the adaptive management will be shared with the public through the agency web site and will include the following elements:

- 1) Conduct Annual Fishery Management Review. The Department shall annually evaluate fishery management tools and parameters, and identify improvements as necessary to accurately predict fishery performance and escapement.
- 2) Improve In-season Management. The Department shall develop, evaluate, and implement fishery management models, procedures, and management measures that are projected to enhance the effectiveness of fishery management relative to management based on preseason predictions.
- 3) Review Spawner Goals. The Department shall review spawner goals to ensure that they reflect the current productivity of salmon within the following timelines:
 - a) Coho: January 1, 2016
 - b) Chum: January 1, 2019
 - c) Chinook: January 1, 2020
- 4) Evaluate Additional Mark-Selective Commercial Fishing Gear. The Department shall complete by January 2017 an assessment of options to implement additional methods for mark-selective commercial fishing gear in Willapa Bay. The assessment shall identify the likely release mortality rates for each gear type, the benefits to rebuilding naturally spawning populations, and the potential implementation costs.
- 5) Comprehensive Hatchery Assessment. The Department shall complete a comprehensive review of the hatchery programs in the Willapa Bay region by June 2016. The review shall identify the capital funding necessary to maintain or enhance current hatchery programs, identify changes in release locations or species that would enhance recreational and commercial fishing opportunities, and the use of re-use water systems, water temperature manipulation to increase production hatchery capacity.
- 6) Ocean Ranching Opportunities. The Department shall complete by January 2016 a comprehensive review of opportunities and constraints to implement ocean ranching of salmon in Willapa Bay.

Delegation of Authority

The Commission delegates the authority to the Director, through the North of Falcon

stakeholder consultation process, to set seasons for recreational and commercial fisheries in the Willapa Bay Basin, and to adopt permanent and emergency regulations to implement these fisheries.

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