

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Briefing Memorandum
Columbia River Management Policy Implementation
Draft May 4, 2017

Briefing Objectives

Provide Commissioners with:

- 1) an update on the status of 2017 implementation of the Columbia River Basin Salmon Management policy; and
- 2) an opportunity to further discuss and clarify guidance to the director regarding Policy implementation.

Background

- 1) Delegated Authority. The policy states “The Director will work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to achieve implementation of this Commission action in a manner that results in concurrent regulations between the two states. The Director will consult with the Commission Chair if it becomes necessary to deviate from the Commission’s policy to achieve concurrent regulations with Oregon.”
- 2) Effects of Non-concurrent Rules. The ideal outcome is that the states have consistent policy direction and concurrent fishery rules. A lack of concurrent rules and management objectives, if poorly handled, could result in conservation conflicts, issues for US v. Oregon, license reciprocity issues, and subject fishers to different and potentially confusing enforcement regimes that could increase the risk of violations. However, in the past, the states have been able to manage around relatively minor policy differences (e.g., a 5% difference in the spring Chinook commercial allocation) to achieve concurrent rules.

Lower Columbia River Fall Chinook Fishery Planning

The North of Falcon planning process has been completed with results consistent with the Commissioner discussion on the March 24 conference call:

- 1) Commercial Fishery. As anticipated on the March 24 conference call, the commercial fall Chinook fishery is constrained by a very low B-run steelhead return:
 - a. projected 6-day season versus 13 days in 2016;
 - b. projected 21% reduction in catch relative to actual 2016 catch.
- 2) Recreational Fishery. As discussed on the March 24 conference call, the recreational fisheries were planned with the intent of achieving the Policy guidance for fishing seasons. The planned recreational fishery achieve this season structure with salmon bag limits the same as in 2016:
 - a. Buoy 10: August 1 to Labor Day
 - b. Tongue Point to Warrior Rock:
 - i. August 1 - Sept. 7, non-mark selective
 - ii. Sept. 8 – 14, mark-selective
 - c. Warrior Rock to Bonneville Dam: August 1 – October 31

- 3) Lower Columbia River Tule Impacts Remain Available. Current planned fisheries do not fully use the available ESA-impacts for lower Columbia River tule or Snake River Chinook.

Lower Columbia River Spring Chinook Fisheries

- 1) Unusual Conditions. High flows and cold water continue to result in an unusual season.
- 2) Passage at Bonneville Remains Low. For the preseason forecast to be accurate, the run would need to be about 2% complete and a good two weeks late. A runsize update will likely not be available for 1-2 weeks.
- 3) Recreational Fishery Catch at Early Season Limit. The recreational fishery has closed with fishery mortality near the early season limit (current – 6,549 versus 6,905 available prior to run update).
- 4) Commercial Off-Channel Fishery Remains within Impact Limit. Commercial off-channel fisheries impacts remain below the season limit (current - 302 upriver spring Chinook impacts out of an allocation of 610).

Next Steps

The Columbia River Basin Salmon Management Policy delegated implementation authority to the Director.

Consistent with this authority, the Department’s discussions with Oregon will continue to be guided by the Policy provisions, including the desired season structure for recreational fisheries, the adaptive management provisions regarding mainstem commercial fisheries, and analysis of the various factors affecting fisheries in the lower Columbia River in 2017.

In particular, the Department will be seeking agreement to extend the recreational fisheries for fall Chinook to more fully utilize the available impacts, and closely monitoring the spring Chinook fisheries and abundance updates.

As required by the Policy, “The Director will work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to achieve implementation of this Commission action in a manner that results in concurrent regulations between the two states. The Director will consult with the Commission Chair if it becomes necessary to deviate from the Commission’s policy to achieve concurrent regulations with Oregon.”

Additional Information

Snake River Spring Chinook Fishery – open on following schedule until impact limit reached

Area A: Open Friday and Saturday each week beginning April 28

Areas A & B: Open Sunday and Monday each week beginning April 30

Bonneville Dam to Washington/Oregon Border Spring Chinook Fishery

Open March 16 through May 5