

Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: April 22, 2025

Agenda Item: Petition to extend fishing season on seven lakes in eastern Washington

Presenter: Chris Donley, Region 1 Regional Fish Program Manager

Background summary:

Mr. Anthony Redder petitioned WDFW to extend the fishing season from the fourth Saturday in April to September 30 to the fourth Saturday in April to October 31st on seven lakes in eastern Washington (WDFW administrative Region 1). The list of lakes in the petition includes Badger, Deer (Lincoln Co., a.k.a Deer Springs) Fan, Fish (Spokane Co.), Fishtrap, West Medical and Williams (Spokane Co.). This petition will extend the fishing season for each of these lakes by one month. Petitioner states this will add simplicity to the fishing rules pamphlet to be consistent with multiple other lakes in eastern Washington that close on October 31st. In addition, he believes additional open time will increase fishing opportunities for anglers on these seven lakes and contribute positively to the local economy.

WDFW Wildlife and Enforcement programs were consulted on this proposal. Neither program had concerns regarding increased workload from season extensions or waterfowl hunter/angler conflicts.

Staff recommendation:

Deny the petition and begin rulemaking to adjust rules on five of the seven lakes listed in the petition. Do not change the rules on Fish (Spokane Co.) and Deer (Lincoln Co., a.k.a Deer Springs).

Fish - WDFW does not own or operate public access to this lake. The access is through a county park. The Spokane County Parks and Recreation Department was contacted and asked about extending the fishing season. Their perspective is that the County is already overwhelmed by public use at this lake during the current outdoor recreation season. They will not have the funds or staff to operate access beyond the current time the park is open to the public. Extending the fishery will put an undue burden on the County to maintain the area and clean up after public that use the access area after the park has been closed for the outdoor recreation season.

Deer (Lincoln Co., a.k.a Deer Springs) – WDFW does not own or operate the access to this lake. This lake is accessed through an agreement with a private landowner. The landowner allows access and does not take payment for public use. Allowing anglers to access the lake after the end of September will create additional user conflicts and maintenance issues that are not anticipated by the landowner under the current use of the access. Specifically, allowing anglers to access the lake after Fall rains will lead to additional damage to an already difficult access road situation. The landowner has been consulted with and would prefer to leave the access timing and duration as is.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

Several issues may arise during rulemaking to be aware of:

1. There are private resorts on some of the lakes listed for the rule change. These small businesses may have a differing perspective on whether adding days to the fishery are beneficial to their business or for recreation on the lake. These perspectives on the proposal should be heard through a public process where their comments can be weighed on extending the season.
 2. Most of these lakes are surrounded by private homes/landowners that may or may not want additional public access and the presence of more anglers on their lakes during a time that has generally been closed to fishing and very quiet for those that live around the lake. The landowners on and around the lake have perspectives that should be heard through a public process where their comments can be weighed on extending the season.
 3. Some of these lakes are used by waterfowl hunters. With extending the fishing season, waterfowl
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hunter/angler conflicts may arise. WDFW enforcement, wildlife program and water access staff were asked about this issue. No program had immediate concerns with changing fishing rules on the proposed lakes. However, experience leaves some staff to believe there will be potential for conflicts in the future.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

Likely none, may increase license sales undetectably

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

1. Spokane County Parks and Recreation was contacted in regard to Fish Lake (Spokane Co.) See above in the Staff Recommendations section what was gleaned from conversation with the County.
2. Private landowner was contacted regarding Deer Lake (Lincoln County, a.k.a Deer Springs) See above in Staff Recommendations section what was gleaned from conversation with the landowner.
3. Additional public input needs to be taken from the public, private resorts and lake residents during the comment period for rulemaking.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Initiate rulemaking on Badger, Fan, Fishtrap, West Medical and Williams (Spokane Co.) lakes.

Draft motion language:

I move to deny the petition and to direct staff to initiate rule making for Badger, Fan, Fishtrap, West Medical and Williams lakes.

Post decision communications plan:

A letter will be sent to Mr. Anthony Redder to explain the decision.