

**FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
POLICY DECISION**

**POLICY TITLE: Grays Harbor Basin
Salmon Management**

POLICY NUMBER: C-3621

**Cancels or
Supersedes: C-3621 Grays Harbor Basin
Salmon Management (2014)**

Effective Date: 10/25/2024

See Also: Policies C-3608, C-3624

**Approved
by:**



**Chair, Washington Fish and Wildlife
Commission**

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set management objectives and to provide management guidance for natural (in-river) and hatchery production, and recreational and commercial harvest of spring and fall Chinook, coho, and chum salmon populations in the Grays Harbor Basin.

Authority Definition and Intent

This Policy is established by the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) and is applicable to the management by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) of spring and fall Chinook, coho, and chum salmon (salmon) in the Grays Harbor Basin as the Commission's interpretation of the Commission and Department mandate described in RCW 77.04.112.

The intent of this Policy is to provide guidance for the management of natural- and hatchery-origin production, and recreational and commercial harvest of salmon in the Grays Harbor Basin. Management of natural- and hatchery-origin production and harvest will be transparent and consistent with normal agency operations and existing agency and Commission policies (e.g., C-3624).

Policy Objectives

These policy objectives are a statement of the Commission's values and vision for the future conditions of Grays Harbor environment, the salmon populations in Grays Harbor, and the recreational and commercial fishing opportunities in the marine and freshwaters of Grays Harbor.

1. Productive natural-spawning populations that are locally adapted, diverse genetically to maintain adaptability, and occur in densities appropriate for the local environment.

2. Sustainable fishing levels for both recreational and commercial fisheries that maximize harvest opportunities.
3. Management actions associated with harvest, hatchery production¹, and natural- origin escapement adhere to ecosystem-based management principles that consider the risks and benefits to species and habitats within the Grays Harbor Basin system, including vulnerabilities to a changing climate.

Adaptive Management

Each year appropriate data (performance measures; see below) on commercial and recreational harvest, and natural- and hatchery- origin escapement into the rivers of Grays Harbor will be collected and evaluated. These data and subsequent analyses must be used to determine if the policy objectives are being achieved. If objectives are not being optimally achieved, harvest and hatchery production levels should be altered, and escapement goals re-evaluated until objectives are optimally achieved. Monitoring, data collection, and data analyses are conducted as part of normal agency operations, and the adaptive management process allows for changes in commercial and recreational harvest, and natural-origin escapement goals without approval from the Commission.

Guidance

The Department will apply the following principles in the management of salmon in the Grays Harbor Basin:

1. Promote the conservation of salmon by managing fisheries consistent with conservation objectives.
2. Meet the terms of *US v. Washington*, with spawning escapement goals and fisheries developed and jointly agreed to with the Quinault Indian Nation. The Department shall seek agreement with the Quinault Indian Nation to manage fisheries with the intent of meeting salmon spawner goals for the Grays Harbor Basin.
3. Department staff shall work with the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation in management of the state share of harvestable salmon.
4. Calculate performance measures (e.g., proportion of natural spawners that are of hatchery-origin – pHOS) that estimate the consequence of a specific management action with respect to one or more of the policy objectives. This will allow for appropriate monitoring of management actions and facilitate adaptive management, if necessary.
5. Develop and improve, evaluate, and implement in-season fishery management models, procedures, and management measures that are projected to enhance the effectiveness of fishery management relative to management based on preseason predictions.

¹WDFW hatchery management falls under the authority of the Commission's Anadromous Salmon and Steelhead Policy C-3624.

6. Work with partners (including Regional Fishery Enhancement Groups, Office of the Chehalis Basin, nonprofit organizations, the public, and Lead Entities) to protect and restore habitat productivity.
7. In a manner consistent with conservation objectives, the Department shall seek to enhance the overall economic well-being and stability of Grays Harbor Basin fisheries.
8. Recreational and WFDW-managed commercial fisheries shall be structured (e.g., schedule, location, gear) to minimize gear and other fishery conflicts. WDFW-managed commercial gillnet fisheries in a fishing area or aggregate area (i.e., Area 2A/2B/2D; or Area 2C) shall be scheduled with the understanding of the importance of providing periods of unobstructed passage for salmon into freshwater habitats.
9. Harvest management:
 - a. State commercial and recreational fisheries will focus on the harvest of hatchery fish. 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 goals) 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. State commercial fisheries directed at species which are forecasted to be below escapement objectives will utilize gear types that provide the most conservation benefit (e.g., tangle nets).
 - b. The Department shall work through the Pacific Salmon Commission to promote the conservation of Grays Harbor salmon and, in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, pursue the implementation of fishery management actions necessary to achieve policy objectives.
 - c. Within the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) process, the Department shall support management measures that promote the attainment of Grays Harbor policy objectives consistent with the Council's Salmon Fishery Management Plan.
 - d. The Department shall conduct Management Strategy Evaluations for stocks to evaluate alternative harvest control rules. Until such actions are implemented, the Department shall use the following spawner escapement goals as harvest control measures.
 - i. Chehalis spring Chinook: 1,400
 - ii. Chehalis fall Chinook: 9,753
 - iii. Humptulips fall Chinook: 3,573
 - iv. Chehalis coho: 28,506
 - v. Humptulips coho: 6,894
 - vi. Grays Harbor chum: 21,000

- e. **Fishery Management:** Subject to the provisions of the Adaptive Management section, the following species-specific sections describe the presumptive path for achieving conservation objectives. Grays Harbor fisheries will be structured to result in a fair sharing of harvestable fish between WDFW-managed commercial, marine recreational, and freshwater recreational fisheries. Mixed stock fisheries, WDFW marine commercial, recreational, and lower mainstem Chehalis River recreational fisheries will be managed to the extent that they do not preclude tributary recreational fisheries. WDFW-managed fisheries shall not result in an impact of more than 5% of the return when the natural-origin adult return exceeds the spawner objective by less than 10%.
- i. **Spring Chinook Salmon:** Fisheries will be managed with the intent of achieving escapement goals for natural-origin spring Chinook.
 - ii. **Fall Chinook Salmon:** Fisheries will be managed with the intent of achieving escapement goals for natural-spawning¹ fall Chinook. The WDFW commercial fishery will be managed to incidental harvest only of fall Chinook during fisheries directed at coho and chum salmon.
 - iii. **Coho Salmon:** Fisheries will be managed with the intent of achieving escapement goals for natural-spawning¹ coho salmon. Provisions within the Pacific Salmon Treaty may prompt further restrictions when forecasted abundances are in the “low abundance category”.
 - iv. **Chum Salmon:** Fisheries will be managed with the intent of achieving escapement goals for natural-origin chum salmon.
10. The Department shall annually evaluate fishery management tools and parameters and identify improvements as necessary to accurately predict fishery performance and escapement.

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 WDFW-managed commercial fisheries in Grays Harbor, to adopt permanent and emergency regulations to implement these fisheries, and to make harvest agreements with treaty and non-treaty tribes and other government agencies. The Commission fully expects that the Director and agency staff will continue to communicate with the public, and the Commission, to consider new information, evaluate alternate means for carrying out policy objectives, and consider instances in which it may make sense to deviate from the presumptive path forward. That is the nature of both adaptive management and policy implementation, when faced with a dynamic natural environment.

¹Current escapement goals were calculated when full mark rates of hatchery fish were unavailable. Therefore, until updated harvest control plans can be completed, these stocks are managed as natural spawners (i.e., fish that lay eggs in the gravel).