

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife North of Falcon Background Information

Key terms and suggested resources



A WDFW creel checker at a Bellingham boat ramp samples a hatchery-marked Chinook salmon caught in the San Juan Islands (Marine Area 7).



Washington
Department of
**FISH &
WILDLIFE**

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What is North of Falcon (NOF)?

- North of Falcon (NOF) refers to fisheries that occur north of Cape Falcon on the northern Oregon coast and encompasses Oregon and Washington (Columbia River, Coast, and within the Puget Sound management unit).
- Each year from February through April, state, federal, and tribal fishery managers gather to plan recreational and commercial salmon fisheries. In Washington state and a northern portion of Oregon, this series of meetings—involving representatives from federal, state, and tribal governments and recreational and commercial fishing industries—is known as the [NOF process](#). This process builds on salmon run forecasting by state, tribal and federal scientists that begins each fall, with forecasts typically available by early spring.
- The [NOF process](#) also involves a series of public and state/tribal meetings from February through April to come to an agreement for the upcoming year’s salmon fishing seasons.
- WDFW divides salmon fisheries in specific [marine areas](#) into two management area units: coastal fisheries (Marine Areas 1 through 4) and Puget Sound fisheries (Marine Areas 5 through 13 including the Straits of Juan de Fuca and Georgia, Puget Sound, Hood Canal, and San Juan Islands). Extensive planning and discussion during NOF are also focused on the Columbia River and other freshwater salmon fisheries across Washington, as well as certain steelhead fisheries.
- The [Pacific Fishery Management Council \(PFMC\)](#) establishes ocean salmon seasons from three to 200 nautical miles off the Pacific Coast and includes [Neah Bay \(Marine Area 4\)](#), [La Push \(Marine Area 3\)](#), [Westport-Ocean Shores \(Marine Area 2\)](#), and [Columbia River/Ilwaco \(Marine Area 1\)](#).
- In certain rivers, salmon fisheries determined through NOF may also overlap with and influence steelhead fisheries, or steelhead conservation and co-management may influence salmon seasons; for example, spring Chinook or fall coho fisheries.

What governmental policies affect the NOF process?

- [The Boldt Decision \(1974\)](#) – Upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court and based upon treaties with the Puget Sound Treaty tribes to allow the state and tribes to manage their own fisheries (co-managers) and share the harvestable surplus salmon.
- [Endangered Species Act \(ESA\)](#) – Fisheries must not pose jeopardy to federally ESA-listed fish such as [Puget Sound Chinook \(1999\)](#).
- [Pacific Salmon Treaty \(U.S./Canada\)](#) – Helps ensure enough salmon destined for the southern U.S. are allowed to pass through Canadian waters to allow fishing opportunity and enough fish to reach the spawning grounds (and vice versa for salmon stocks returning to Canada).
 - Conservation objectives are agreed to by the co-managers to ensure enough salmon get past fisheries and reach rivers to spawn and recover the population.
- [WDFW Fish and Wildlife Commission North of Falcon Policy](#) – This Policy guides Department staff in considering conservation, allocation, in-season management, and

monitoring issues associated with the annual NOF salmon fishery planning process. When considering management issues, Department staff will ensure that decisions are made consistent with the Department's statutory authority; U.S. v. Washington; U.S. v. Oregon; the Endangered Species Act; the Puget Sound Chinook Harvest Management Plan; the Pacific Salmon Treaty; the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Framework Salmon Management Plan; pertinent state/tribal agreements; and the applicable Fish and Wildlife Commission policies.

What are the steps for annual salmon fishing seasons?

- Estimate the forecasted returns of individual hatchery and wild stocks of salmon. Forecasted returns means estimating the numbers of individual and wild stocks returning to their spawning grounds.
- Determine if enough fish are returning to allow for harvest.
- Predict harvest for tribal and state recreational and commercial fisheries for Oregon and Washington; include the northern fisheries (Alaska and Canada) too.
- Analyze forecast and harvest scenarios using the Fisheries Regulations Assessment Model (FRAM) to determine whether proposed fishing plans meet management objectives (e.g., ESA impact limits).
- Negotiate with the recreational anglers, commercial fishers, and tribes to allow a fair sharing of catch and ensure conservation objectives are met.
- Combine all Puget Sound and ocean fisheries into the annual “co-managers’ List of Agreed Fisheries” document that the recreational (sport) fishing rules pamphlet is based upon.

Glossary of key terms

Adult equivalents (AEQ): Number of wild salmon that would have returned to the river in either the present year or future years if not killed in fisheries.

Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE): The Catch Per Unit Effort is a standard measure of the rate of catch in a fishery. In recreational fisheries, the unit of effort is defined as one angler trip. Therefore, the CPUE is the number of legal sized fish caught per angler trip.

Concise Explanatory Statement (CES): [Concise Explanatory Statement](#) describes the WDFW’s reasons for adopting the annual recreational salmon fishing rules and responds to public comments received on the proposed rules. The rules, once adopted, will be set forth in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). The management period for each fishing season typically ends in April and begins anew each May.

Coded-wire tag (CWT): Coded-wire tag is a tiny piece of stainless steel placed in nose of juvenile salmon and recovered from adults that return to estimate where the fish is from. Each tag is inscribed with a binary code that identifies its specific release group.

Constraining stock: Wild salmon for a particular river that is estimated to be the most over-impacted that will limit (or reduce) fishing opportunities.

Critical exploitation rate ceiling (CERC): Maximum fishery impacts allowed when a stock is in critically low abundance, see Escapement LAT.

Dockside sampling: This is a method the WDFW sampling unit uses to gather information on effort (number of anglers), kept and released Chinook and coho (number of marked and unmarked fish), and other fish species kept and released for the site on the day sampled. Sampling usually occurs five days per week when fishing areas are open for salmon.

Effort surveys: WDFW conducts boat or aerial surveys during salmon fisheries. WDFW staff conduct boat surveys on the water and ask what species anglers are targeting and where anglers will be taking their boat out at the end of the day. WDFW uses this information to determine how to distribute the dockside sampling effort and how to weigh the use of individual sampling sites. Aerial surveys are conducted in marine areas that are too large to effectively survey by boat, sampling staff conduct aerial surveys to obtain information on the location, number, and type of recreational fishing boats.

Emergency Fishing Rule Change: WDFW rule change resulting from in-season management actions based on monitoring of fishery resources. These can include additional days on the water, early closure of a fishery, or changes to the bag limits. The updates reflect changes to the [Sport Fishing Pamphlet](#). Rules found in the pamphlet are in effect unless superseded by a rule change. These are critical rule changes that require immediate action and are good for 120 days or less. Recreational emergency Fishing Rule Changes are distributed via email and posted to the [WDFW website](#). All emergency rule changes—recreational and commercial—are also archived [online](#).

Encounters: Number of fish harvested plus released. Encounters contribute to impacts against protected stocks, including catch and release mortalities.

Escapement: Number of wild salmon returning to the spawning grounds for a particular stock.

Escapement Low Abundance Threshold (Escapement LAT): A threshold of returning salmon that represents increased management responsiveness to avoid a stock entering critical status. For additional information see section 4.2 in the [Comprehensive Management Plan for Puget Sound Chinook](#). Salmon stocks are managed to allow enough mature salmon to escape harvest (called “escapement” or “conservation objective”) and return to freshwater to spawn.

Exploitation Rate (ER): An ER is the maximum allowed proportion of a salmon stock that can be removed by a fishery. It is a percentage of total mortality (i.e., in fisheries and on spawning grounds) that occurs in fisheries, including landed and non-landed fishery mortality components.

Exploitation rate ceiling (ERC): Maximum allowable rate of returning wild salmon that can be killed to achieve spawning escapement objectives that are consistent with current habitat function. For additional information see section 4.4 in the [Comprehensive Management Plan for Puget Sound Chinook](#).

Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA): Establishes protections for fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered; provides for adding species to and removing them from the list of threatened and endangered species, and for preparing and implementing plans for their recovery; provides for interagency cooperation to avoid take of listed species and for issuing permits for otherwise prohibited activities; provides for cooperation with States, including authorization of financial assistance; and implements the provisions of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna](#).

Fishery Scalers: The relationship between the anticipated impacts to stocks in a fishery, and the FRAM (see definition below) base period impacts to stocks for that fishery (marine area and timestep). It's an adjustment to the modeled base period impacts to stocks based on change in catch or effort.

Fisheries Regulation Assessment Model (FRAM): A model used to combine forecasts and harvest of fisheries to estimate number of wild fish that will return to the rivers to spawn.

Forecast: Estimated number of adult salmon that will return.

Impacts: The cumulative effect on protected salmon stocks or runs from harvest and other sources of mortality, including catch and release mortalities from encounters. Impacts are severely restricted by the Endangered Species Act, exploitation rates, and other conservation measures.

Jack salmon: Salmon that return to freshwater and spawn one to two years earlier than the other adult salmon within their brood year. Jack salmon are commonly smaller in size.

List of Agreed Fisheries (LOAF): Set by WDFW during the North of Falcon process. These dates cover all fisheries that occur from May 15 of a given year to May 14 of the following given year. These season summaries are not meant to be comprehensive regulations; more details and regulations are included in the annual Washington Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet and is usually available by early summer.

Lower Columbia Natural Tules (LCN Tules): Lower Columbia Natural Tules Chinook (sometimes called LCR, Lower Columbia River, tule).

Mark-selective fisheries (MSF): A hatchery targeted fishery where wild fish are released.

Mixed stock fishery: These are fisheries that take place in areas that encounter multiple stocks of potentially different species, geographic or genetic origins or any combination of these

variables. The proportion of stocks encountered in these fisheries may differ both season to season and year to year. Mixed stock fisheries offer a challenge to fisheries managers due to the difficulty in targeting fish of a specific stock.

Modeling: A mathematical representation of a stock or fishery based on data.

Mortalities: The number of dead salmon accounted for in a model.

Non-treaty (NT): Non-treaty fisheries (sport and commercial including net and troll).

North of Falcon (NOF): The process to establish salmon seasons for state and tribal fisheries that occur north of Cape Falcon on the northern Oregon coast and encompasses Oregon and Washington (Columbia River, Coast, and Puget Sound).

Release Mortality Rate: Percent of fish released that die due to physical or physiological damage caused by a fishery encounter. In Puget Sound recreational fisheries, WDFW uses a 10% release mortality rate for legal-sized Chinook and a 7% release mortality rate for coho. Different release mortality rates may be used depending on gear types, location of fishing, species encountered, or for sub-legal sized salmon. For additional information, see Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 in the [Fishery Regulation Assessment Model](#).

Resident fish: Hatchery or wild salmon, often Chinook or coho, that remain in or near the waters of the Salish Sea instead of migrating into the open ocean. Typically, smaller, and sleeker than salmon that migrate to the open ocean.

Selective gear fishery: A fishery with gear restrictions in place, such as single barbless hooks, or use of artificial lures only.

Southern United States (SUS): Washington, Oregon, and California; terminology used in salmon season-setting process and defined by all marine fishing areas south of the British Columbia-U.S. boundary.

Southern U.S. pre-terminal exploitation rate (SUS PT ER): Fish caught in marine waters within the southern U.S.

Terminal area fishery: A fishery conducted in the river of origin or directly adjacent to the river of origin where there is typically only one fish stock present. Terminal salmon fisheries in Puget Sound include the Tulalip Terminal Area Fishery, Sinclair Inlet and Port Orchard, and East Elliott Bay.

Test fishing: In some marine areas, WDFW sampling staff conduct a “boat test fishery” which is representative of the same time, area and fishing methods used by recreational salmon anglers. WDFW conducts test fishing to obtain the ratio of the four size and mark status categories

(legal marked, legal unmarked, sub-legal marked and sub-legal unmarked). Sampling staff also collect other biological data during test fishing.

Total exploitation rate (Total ER): Total exploitation rate for Alaska, Canada, and southern U.S.

Treaty fisheries (T): Treaty fisheries (tribal ceremonial/subsistence and commercial: net, freshwater net, troll.

Voluntary Trip Report (VTR): The [Voluntary Trip Report program](#) is working to increase angler participation in all selective Chinook and coho fisheries occurring in Marine Areas 1 through 13. WDFW uses these reports to maintain and increase salmon fishing opportunities. Learn more in the [WDFW Puget Sound Recreational Mark-Selective Chinook Salmon Fisheries \(PDF\)](#) brochure.

Find additional [common salmon terms](#) on the Pacific Fishery Management Council website.

Background links for more information:

- As part of the salmon season setting process, WDFW has created [The Salmon Fishing Current blog](#). The blog is a way to provide regular updates of the ongoing developments and when salmon fisheries are happening throughout the recreational fishing season.
- Refer to the [WDFW North of Falcon webpage](#) that includes public input form and Frequently Asked Questions.
- Refer to the [WDFW tribal co-management webpage](#) for information on government-to-government salmon and steelhead management.
- Link for the [Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission website](#).
- Link for the [NWIFC Northwest Treaty Tribes webpage](#).
- This is the link for the [List of Agreed Fisheries \(LOAF\) and season summaries](#).
- Read the [WDFW blog on understanding Puget Sound salmon fisheries management](#) and watch the [WDFW YouTube video](#). Each provides useful information on the complexities of Puget Sound salmon management.
- Refer to the [WDFW Puget Sound recreational mark-selective Chinook salmon fisheries brochure](#) for additional information.