

Why hasn't ODFW Commission removed the commercial gill nets from the Columbia River mainstem?

SELECTIVITY: Sports anglers are required to release native fish without removing them from the water by removing tension on the barbless hook (which is a challenging method to keep the fish "on" in the first place) or cutting the leader. The commercial gill net fleet is only required to be selective on Spring salmon runs (according to ODFW Staff statement to the Commission 3/17/2017), and thus only during Spring are they required to revive and release native fish (no ODFW data is available on compliance). Summer and Fall salmon runs do not require the commercial gill net fleet to be selective on bi-catch nor are they monitored at all per ODFW staff statement 3/17/2017 public meeting. ODFW Staff stated that the commercial gill net fleet is assigned an arbitrary value of 30% of the annual allowable impact on native and protected species runs (with no monitored sampling) even though reports of up to 50% mortality occur for long net soak times. There is no monitoring of the commercial gill net fleet catch. Since it is a small, known group of boats and the fishing dates are controlled and the catch represent roughly the same number the fish taken that the Sports anglers it is not clear why only Sports anglers are regularly monitored and fined for infractions. In addition, why hasn't ODFW collected mortality data from the commercial gill net fleet directly instead of assigning an arbitrary value to their impact (simple ride-along data collection is all that is required on nominally 20-50 boats).

COST: Economically, the 267 gill net fleet members' catch has ranged from \$3.6-\$5M annually (about 3% of the \$150M Oregon ocean commercial fishing total.) Compare this to the sports-angler economic value of 530,000 licensed persons annually (2016 & 2017) with their boats, fuel, supporting bait, fishing gear, tow-rigs, transit fuel, and guides, plus hotels and restaurants which represents multiple \$10s of millions in State and business revenue. Both groups are allotted about equal amounts of fish.

CO-USE OF A SHARED FISHERY: In 2016, ODFW Commission has allowed a roughly 50 active commercial gill net boats (of the 267 licenses issued) with a take valued at \$3.6-\$5M/y) and a good lobby group to control the Columbia River Basin tributaries fishery without regard to the 140,000 licensed sports anglers. In 2016, ODFW sports-anglers paid \$25.6M resident and non-resident sports fishing licenses plus \$1.3M for Columbia River Basin Endorsement fees collected (this does not including the above-mentioned peripheral business in-State expenditures) vs \$18,796 collected for gill net licenses both resident and non-resident. Just the license fees alone would suggest a much different split in the allowable take by each group. By the same ODFW Staff assessment, sport-anglers are assigned a 12% impact on Spring and up to 15% impact on summer and fall fisheries and they are dock checked and ticketed for any bi-catch. The gill net fleet is assigned a 30% impact for the same number of fish. Because the gill nets are non-selective, and again, according to ODFW data reported before 2013 commercial gill nets took 1100-1400 sturgeon each year with no regard to size regulations. When the rules changed in 2013, the commercial gill net group stopped reporting any take even though there was no change in gear or fishing technique. Sports anglers have not been allowed to keep Sturgeon since 2013* and are monitored and fined for infractions.

*During 2017, both commercial gill netters and sports anglers were allowed a few days (~4) of Sturgeon fishing. This promotes combat fishing where the entire fleet all are on the water at the same time. Roughly the same number of Sturgeon were taken by both groups.

IMPROVEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF BOTH USERS: Who supports the hatchery fish being planted in the non-main stream Columbia River locations for the commercial gill net fleet? ODFW provides hatchery operating funds to which the license fees of the commercial fleet contribute about 1.5% total for a 50% share of the annual take of fish. In this same plan, the commercial gill net fleet was to be removed from the main stem Columbia River to the hatchery planted locations off of the main stem. This has not been implemented to date. Also, changes in net types were to be initiated to allow lower impact by gill nets to the native and protected fish. Only a couple of tests have been conducted to date. The transition funding for these net changes will be retracted next year (2019) becoming part of the ODFW normal operating funds with no progress toward the promised action of no nets in the main stem.

DEROGATORY STATEMENTS: The Board has put forth that Sports anglers do not remove sufficient hatchery fish from native spawning grounds. This is true because the Board has imposed low daily catch limits on hatchery stock for sports anglers of one or two fish per trip. Hatchery tags are available that allow additional hatchery fish removal but allowing only one or two fish per day thus requiring many trips to accomplish the task significantly impacts the efficiency of Sports anglers. A change to the daily bag limit for hatchery fish would increase Sports angler catch substantially. The commercial gill net "efficient" method of taking all fish in an unselective manner with high mortality on bi-catch native fish and no monitoring of the bi-catch will obviously be more efficient. In addition, commercial gill netting contributes nothing to spawn ground nutrients up-river because catch and bi-catch is dumped at Astoria whereas the Sports anglers distribute carcasses far up-stream. There is also likely some correlation with the pinniped problem in Astoria all the way up to Willamette Falls and Bonneville Dam that has not

been addressed but exacerbated by the extra fish dumped in the main stem near Astoria to attract these nuisance predators.

BAIT AND SWITCH: 2017 ODFW Fishing Regulations stated that the Columbia River Basin Endorsement fee was collected to fund “the transition to eliminate non-tribal commercial gill nets on the lower main stem Columbia River and provide additional salmon and steelhead for sport fishing.” 2018 ODFW Fishing Regulations states that the Columbia River Basin Endorsement fee was collected to fund “improvements to Columbia River Fisheries, including: expanded off-channel commercial fishing areas, fisheries specific research and monitoring, additional hatchery production, and commercial/recreational fisheries law enforcement.” Obtaining scientific data on the commercial gill net bi-catch impacts and monitoring the commercial fleet take would be important and appropriate near-term goals to support such a change in direction.

SERIES OF ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

The bycatch mortality rate reported by ODFW on the Commercial gill net fleet for summer and fall is as high as 50% significantly topping the Sports angler rate of 15% and the applied rate of 30%.

Without patrolled monitoring of the Commercial gill net fleet, there is no indication that bi-catch is dispositioned properly without monetary value. It is not clear why the commercial gill net fleet is not fully monitored by law enforcement.

There were 267 Commercial gill net licenses issued in 2017. There is no indication of how many licenses were used (suggested 100 total with 20-50 each outing), nominal fishing days included only about 50 vessels. Also there is no upper limit on how many licenses can be issued. Legally, all 267 licensed vessels could be used which would shorten the season drastically and do significantly more damage via bi-catch.

It was suggested that issued gill net licenses could be bought out, but it is not clear why ODFW is issuing them in the first place with so many questions about the bi-catch issue.

Note that ODFW reports Native Americans using purse seine nets (Commercial gill net fleet has only tried with a few boats and results are not reported by ODFW to our knowledge).

Consideration should be given to raising commercial gill net fees to support hatcheries to a level commensurate with the advantage that is taken with the associated catch of hatchery fish (50% of hatchery operating costs).

Washington State has remained committed to the original 2013 OR/WA agreement to move commercial gill nets out of the main stem Columbia River. Where is Oregon State going with the current planning and break from the 2013 agreement?

Gill-netted fish are worth about 50% of hook caught fish because the fish drown in the net, are not bled out, and remain with guts in the body for many hours degrading the value of the fish.

There appears to be no census data on Coho sports fishing...is there data? With the 2017 season closed for the lower half of the Oregon coast and no season open in the upper half Oregon coast ocean, it is not clear why were Coho allowed to be caught by the Commercial gill net fleet in the Columbia River.

Will Sturgeon retention continue and can the season be limited in some other way rather than only a couple of days allowed for sports angling (like tighter length requirement to limit what is kept in order to lengthen the duration of the season). This used to be (pre-2013) a great fun winter fishery.

ODFW should be directed take positive action on the Pinniped predation problem by removing these predators.

George Larson

541 971-1033

larsonglf@mindspring.com

A REVIEW OF OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION DECISIONS

A review of non-tribal fisheries on the lower Columbia River was initiated in August 2012 at the request of Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber. The Governor asked the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to work with its counterpart in Washington to adopt the necessary rules to:

- Prioritize selective recreational fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River and commercial fisheries in off-channel areas of the lower Columbia River.
- Phase out the use of commercial gill nets in the mainstem Columbia River and transition to use of gill nets to off-channel areas.
- Improve off-channel fisheries by increasing hatchery production in those areas and by enhancing area boundaries and/or locations.
- Continue development and use of alternative selective fishing gear and techniques for commercial mainstem fisheries and implement these fisheries when recreational fishery objectives are met.

Both Washington and Oregon Commissions adopted the package of reforms in December 2012 and the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission re-affirmed these management changes in June 2013.

Oregon Legislative Assembly, 2013 Regular Session, **Senate Bill 830** approved during the 2013 session, established a separate fund starting in 12/2013 called the "Columbia River Fisheries Enhancement Fund" of \$9.75 per year per sport angler annual or \$1.00 per day/sport angler to "enhance fisheries, optimize the economic benefits of fisheries and advance native fish conservation related to Columbia River fish management and reform adopted by rule of the commission." This fund is to remain in effect until January 2, 2022 when any unexpended moneys shall be transferred to the State Wildlife Fund.

Senate Bill 830 also provided a Columbia River fisheries transition fund of \$500,000 from the General Fund that was set aside to aid commercial gill net permit holders to change equipment in order to comply with this Bill, and which, to date, no one has requested. Thus changing to the off-channel fishing locations did not require different equipment nor loss of revenue by the commercial fleet. This fund is abolished January 2, 2019 with monies being returned to the state general fund.

During August and September 2014, a pilot fishery was used to help evaluate the use of seine nets for selective fishing during the commercial salmon fishery in the lower mainstem Columbia River. The results were that although no monetary detriment was incurred, there was no interest by the commercial gill net fleet to implement these changes. There has been a

During 2017, the Oregon Fish and Game Commission changed direction to again allow gill nets in the mainstem Columbia River with no technical basis of harm to the financial viability to commercial gill net fleet and with no regard to prioritizing the sports fishing aspect of the fishery.

As of 2018, the commercial gill nets are now again approved for use in the mainstem Columbia River during all fishery seasons with no regard for fishery by-catch damage which is admittedly as much as 50% with gill nets and long soak times.


A REVIEW OF OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION DECISIONS

Per the ODFW website description of what the sports fishing CRBE fees are used for: "use of the Columbia River Basin Enhancement funds were to enhance fisheries, optimize the economic benefits of fisheries and advance native fish conservation in the mainstem Columbia River. The package was to include a higher priority for sport fishing in the mainstem Columbia River, improve commercial fishing with gillnets in off-channel areas of the lower Columbia River, and improve fish conservation by better targeting of hatchery runs."

It has become apparent that the Commission is not interested in protecting native species or prioritizing sports fishing as directed by the Senate Bill, but only in improving the commercial gill net fleet profitability at the expense of the sports fishing. All funds so far collected only go to enhance the fishery in order to increase profits for the commercial gill net fleet.

The Oregon ODFW commission has returned gill nets into the mainstem Columbia River which does not comply with these efforts as it does not prioritize sports fishing nor does it improve fish conservation by better targeting of hatchery runs and fully contradicts the previous agreement with Washington State on the joint control of the Columbia River fishing.

It is apparent that the commission does not represent the majority stakeholders having no concern for the fishery or the largest license holding group and largest economic resource to the state (~500,000 sports fishers), but only the commercial gill net fleet (~267 permits) and its profitability, it is time to respectfully request commission members to resign due to not being appropriate representatives for the State's citizens.

Harold Fisher


541-760-1725


BUY
a
License

Online Services

Buy a License
Hunter Reporting
Maps

ODFW News

News Releases
ODFW Jobs
Public Meetings

Fish Division

Division Home Page
Division Directory
Fish Hatcheries
Fish Programs
Local Fisheries

Wildlife Division

Division Home Page
Division Directory
Grants / Incentives
Wildlife Areas
Wildlife Habitat
Wildlife Programs

ODFW

About ODFW
Commission
Director's Office
Strategic Vision
Volunteering

[About Us](#) [Fishing](#) [Hunting](#) [Wildlife Viewing](#) [License / Regs](#) [Conservation](#) [Living With Wildlife](#) [Learn to Fish and Hunt](#)

[About ODFW](#) [Budget](#) [Commission](#) [Contact us](#) [Director's office](#) [Economic Impact](#) [History](#) [Jobs](#) [Key Performance Measures](#) [ODFW policies](#)
[OR Administrative Rules \(OARs\)](#) [Photo/video gallery](#) [Public record requests](#) [Social Media](#) [Volunteering](#)
[Fishing Resources](#) [Angler education/events](#) [Columbia River](#) [Commercial Crabbing/clamming](#) [Fish counts](#) [Learn to fish](#) [Recreation Report](#)
[Regulations/updates](#) [Saltwater](#) [Stocking schedule](#) [Salmon/steelhead](#) [Trout](#) [Warmwater](#) [Where & how](#)
[Hunting Resources](#) [Big game](#) [Controlled hunts](#) [Furbearers/trapping](#) [Hunter education & events](#) [Opportunities for youth](#) [Recreation Report](#) [Regulations](#)
[Reporting Upland Game Birds](#) [Waterfowl](#) [Wildlife management](#) [Where & how](#)
[Viewing Resources](#) [Photo/video gallery](#) [Recreation Report](#) [Support wildlife](#) [Viewing Map](#) [Visitor's Guide](#) [Wildlife species](#)
[Licenses & Regulations](#) [Buy online](#) [Commercial](#) [Controlled hunts](#) [Forms/applications/permits](#) [Licenses & fees](#) [License sales locations](#) [Regulations](#)
[Reporting Youth](#)
[Conservation Resources](#) [Conservation Newsletter](#) [Conservation Strategy](#) [Fish conservation & recovery](#) [Invasive species](#) [Marine reserves](#)
[Nearshore Strategy](#) [Oregon Plan](#) [Sensitive species](#) [Threatened/endangered species](#) [Wildlife habitat](#) [Wildlife management](#) [Wildlife species](#)
[Living with Oregon Wildlife](#) [Injured/young wildlife](#) [Wildlife control operators](#) [Wildlife diseases](#) [Wildlife rehabilitation](#)
[Learn to fish](#) [Learn to hunt](#) [Calendar of classes / events](#) [Hunter education](#) [Archery education](#) [Shooting/archery ranges](#) [Trapper education](#)
[About ODFW Outdoors](#)


ODFW RESOURCES

News Releases

Commission approves new endorsement for Columbia Basin fishing and sets 2014 Big Game regulations
[Like](#)
[Share](#)
[Tweet](#)

October 4, 2013

NEWPORT, Ore. – The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission today approved a new fishing endorsement that will be required for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon fishing on the Columbia and Snake rivers, and their tributaries, beginning Jan. 1, 2014.

An annual endorsement will cost \$9.75 when purchased with a fishing, and \$1 per day for daily licenses and will be required on all rivers within the Columbia River Basin when fishing for salmon, steelhead or sturgeon. This includes all rivers and tributaries in the Willamette, Central and Northeast angling zones, and a handful of Columbia River tributaries in the Northwest Zone.

Money from the endorsement will help fund the transition of non-tribal commercial gill nets out of the mainstem Columbia River, freeing up additional salmon and steelhead for sport fishing. The endorsement was authorized by the Oregon Legislature to help fund a package of Columbia River fish management and reform actions adopted by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and their Washington counterparts.

The new endorsement is required beginning Jan. 1, 2014 and will go on sale beginning Dec. 1, 2013. Additional information about the genesis of the endorsement and its geographic scope can be found on the [ODFW website](#).

The Commission also set the 2014 Big Game Regulations. There are no major changes from the 2013 regulations, but several small adjustments were adopted. These include:

- Deleting and adding several bighorn sheep hunts, to account for shifting populations.
- Adding or deleting several controlled deer and elk hunts in response to property damage or population changes.
- Expanding Jackson Travel Management Area (TMA) by 42 square miles.

