

Non-Native Game Fish Management Policy

Purpose of the Non-Native Game Fish Management Policy

This policy provides direction on the management of non-native game fish (as defined in ORS 496.009) to ensure the Department's actions to establish, maintain, enhance, or constrain non-native game species are consistent both with the conservation of native fish and wildlife and providing quality recreational fisheries. It clarifies the Department's management of a diverse suite of non-native game fish species found across the landscape and provides direction on where and when to focus efforts to optimize their recreational use.

Non-Native Game Fish Management Policy Goal

The Department's overarching fish management goal is to ensure the conservation and recovery of native fish species, as outlined in the state's Native Fish Conservation Policy (OAR 635-007-0502 through 0509). This conservation mandate does not preclude the management of non-native game fish, but it does provide the context for where and what type of management is appropriate. As such, the Non-Native Game Fish Management Policy complements the Native Fish Conservation Policy.

The goal of the Non-Native Game Fish Management Policy is to frame how and where to manage non-native game fish to provide recreational angling opportunity and the associated social and economic benefits, while reducing or avoiding risk to native fish and wildlife populations. Implementation of this policy will likely be specific to individual sites, locations, or environments based upon native and non-native game fish distributions, the availability and quality of suitable habitat, and the importance of that habitat to native and non-native game fish species.

Key Elements of Non-Native Game Fish Management

1. The Non-Native Game Fish Management Policy applies to all geographic regions and the diversity of aquatic habitats found across Oregon.
2. Non-native game fish provide important and valued recreational angling opportunities to Oregon. Recreational use of these fisheries has social and economic importance throughout the state.
3. As outlined in the Department's Climate and Ocean Change Policy (OAR 635-900-0001), a changing climate will result in conditions that favor many non-native fish including some non-native game fish. As a result, it is anticipated some species of non-native game fish may expand their distribution.
4. Although non-native game fish provide significant recreational angling opportunity in Oregon and some may have increasing importance due to a changing climate, non-native game fish may also pose risk to Oregon's native fish and wildlife and must be managed to ensure this risk is within acceptable limits.
5. The Department shall manage non-native game fish to meet the following objectives:
 - a. Optimize recreational use to the benefit of Oregonians consistent with conservation of native fish species.
 - b. Provide a variety of recreational angling opportunities reflecting the diverse resource and public interest. These can range from catch-and-release and trophy fisheries to high yield fisheries that optimize surpluses and harvest opportunities.
 - c. Prevent or minimize potential adverse impacts to native fish and wildlife, ecosystem functions, or other recreational fisheries. Adverse impacts may occur through range

- expansion, competition, predation, introduction or transmission of pathogens, interbreeding and hybridization. The presence or relative importance of one or more of these factors may vary significantly across species or locations.
6. This policy does not address the on-going stocking and use of hatchery trout species native to Oregon, such as rainbow and cutthroat trout, and kokanee salmon. These species may be addressed in other forums through development of Conservation Plans, Hatchery Genetic Management Plans, and through federal Endangered Species Act recovery plans.

Directives of the Non-Native Game Fish Management Policy

1. Non-native game fish occur in many aquatic systems throughout the state. Management of these species may differ depending on type of water body (i.e., river, stream, lake or reservoir), how established a population has become, how altered the water body is, and the spatial and temporal overlap with native species. Accordingly, the Department will take the following approach to managing non-native game fish.
 - a. In rivers, streams, and natural lakes where non-native game fish are not present, the Department will actively manage against the establishment of non-native game fish.
 - b. In rivers, streams, and natural lakes where non-native game fish are present and pose a risk to the conservation or recovery of native fish or wildlife, or would be detrimental to the reestablishment of extirpated native fish or wildlife populations, the Department will actively manage against the expansion of non-native game fish populations. At some specific locations, this may include efforts to reduce or remove non-native game fish depending on the degree of conservation risk, management options and resources available, and likelihood of success.
 - c. In rivers, streams, and natural lakes where the impact of non-native game fish on native fish or wildlife is negligible or native fish or wildlife have been extirpated and the natural ecosystem functions have been altered such that reestablishment of native fish populations is unlikely, the Department will manage for recreational opportunity of non-native game fish.
 - d. In man-made ponds, lakes, or reservoirs, if populations of non-native and native game fish combine to provide a recreational fishery (mixed stock fishery), and the associated fishery does not pose a conservation risk to native species, the Department may continue to manage for the full suite of species.
 - e. In man-made ponds, lakes or reservoirs, if a population of non-native game fish is present and the population is detrimental to the quality of the fishery, the Department may actively manage by removing or reducing the non-native population causing the problem to reestablish the desired recreational fishery.
 - f. In waterbodies with significantly altered habitat, the Department will continue to establish, maintain, or enhance a desired recreational fishery for non-native game fish as long as the non-native game fish population and associated fishery do not pose conservation risk to native species.
2. In response to an illegal introduction of a non-native game fish species into a river, stream, lake, or reservoir where that non-native species does not currently exist, the Department, as best possible within available resources, shall:
 - a. Attempt to eradicate the species if it is feasible and practical to do so;
 - b. If the species cannot be eradicated and presents a conservation risk, the Department shall actively manage to reduce its presence or influence;
 - c. If the species cannot be eradicated and presents minimal conservation risk, the

Department shall manage to prevent or minimize its population growth and range expansion, but may also manage the non-native game fish to provide recreational opportunity at that location.