

Columbia River Fishery Management Recommendations
Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission Workgroup Members
October 18, 2012

Introduction

Washington and Oregon have jointly managed fisheries on the lower river for nearly a century. We continue to believe that any effective long-term management plan must be developed by the two states working together. Failure to implement a shared plan threatens our ability to implement orderly fisheries, endangers the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry, and risks the conservation of wild stocks of salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon throughout the Columbia River basin.

The Washington members of the Columbia River Fishery Management Workgroup (WCWG) have reviewed the letters and guidance from Governor Kitzhaber. We agree with Governor Kitzhaber that Columbia River fisheries management is complex and requires the states to balance the legitimate needs and interests of many groups and organizations. We respect the objectives that he has expressed, but recognize that our responsibility is to implement the statutory mandate provided for us by the Washington State legislature.

This document provides our preliminary recommendations for fishery management and artificial production programs affecting lower Columbia River fisheries. Our intent is to promote a focused discussion that leads to comprehensive and cohesive recommendations to our respective commissions. In developing these preliminary recommendations, we have drawn from the joint staff report¹, the suggestions of our advisors, public comment, and the technical analyses provided by our staff.

Our task is a difficult one, and we fully anticipate that these recommendations will be modified as we learn more through the Columbia River Fishery Management Work Group process. The WCWG is committed to work with our counterparts in Oregon to engage in an open and transparent process to improve the management and vitality of our commercial and recreational salmon and sturgeon fisheries in the lower Columbia River.

¹ Management Strategies for Columbia River Recreational and Commercial Fisheries: 2013 and Beyond.

Guiding Principles

The WCWG support the following principles to guide the development of fishery management recommendations for lower Columbia River fisheries.

- 1) Promote the recovery of ESA-listed species and the conservation of wild stocks of salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon in the Columbia River.
- 2) Continue leadership promoting fish recovery, including improved fish survival through the federal Columbia River hydropower system, improved habitat conditions in the tributaries and estuary, hatchery reform, reduced predation by fish, birds, and marine mammals, and fishery management that meets conservation responsibilities.
- 3) Continue to meet terms of *U.S. v. Oregon* management agreements with Columbia River tribes.
- 4) In a manner that is consistent with conservation and does not impair the resource, seek to maintain the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry of the state. Enhance the economic benefits of off-channel commercial fisheries in a manner consistent with conservation and wild stock recovery objectives.
- 5) For steelhead, salmon, and sturgeon, prioritize recreational fisheries in the mainstem and commercial fisheries in off-channel areas of the lower Columbia River.
- 6) Phase out the use of non-selective gill nets in non-tribal commercial fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River. Transition gill net use to off-channel areas.
- 7) Develop and implement selective fishing gear and techniques for commercial mainstem fisheries to optimize conservation and economic benefits.
- 8) Maintain consistent and concurrent policies between Oregon and Washington related to management non-tribal Columbia River fisheries to ensure orderly fisheries as well as the sharing of investments and benefits.

General Provisions

The WCWG recommends the following general provisions regarding the management of fisheries and artificial production programs in the lower Columbia River.

- 1) **Implement Alternative Commercial Fishing Gear for Fall Fisheries.** Initiate pilot commercial fisheries with alternative gears in 2013, incrementally increase implementation in 2014 and 2015, and target full implementation for fall fisheries in 2016 or sooner.

The development and implementation of alternative commercial gears such as purse seines and beach seines provides the opportunity to target fishery harvests on abundant hatchery stocks, reduce the number of hatchery-origin fish in natural spawning areas,

limit impacts to nontarget species and stocks, and provide commercial fishing opportunities.

- 2) **Buyback Gill Net Licenses.** Develop in 2013 and implement beginning in 2014 a program to buyback Washington and Oregon gill net licenses for the Columbia River. Develop, evaluate, and implement other tools to reduce the number of gillnet licenses in a manner consistent with the principles of this plan.

A buyback program will reduce the potential for crowding in off-channel commercial fishing areas and, for interested fishers, promote a transition to alternative fishing gear.

- 3) **Enhance the Ability for Commercial Fishers to Fish in Off-Channel Areas.** Evaluate and implement enhancements (including boundaries, seasons, and new areas) to off-channel commercial fishing areas where the likelihood of impacting ESA-listed stocks is low.
- 4) **Re-Shape Fall Fisheries.** Implement a fall fishery strategy that improves commercial access to hatchery fall Chinook, hatchery coho, and Upriver Bright fall Chinook, addresses lower river hatchery reform, is coordinated with recreational objectives and the terms and conditions of *U.S. v. Oregon*.
 - a) Develop and implement a mark-selective seine fishery for hatchery Chinook and coho during August and September in the lower River.
 - b) Provide a large mesh Upriver Bright fall Chinook target fishery upstream of the Lewis during August and September.
 - c) Develop and implement a mark selective fishery to harvest late stock Washington hatchery Coho in October.
- 5) **Increase Artificial Production in a Manner Consistent with Conservation Objectives.** Increase artificial production using locations, species, stocks, and control mechanisms (i.e., weirs, mark-selective fisheries) in a manner consistent with wild stock conservation objectives. An initial proposal to provide mutual benefits to Washington and Oregon commercial fishers is to increase:
 - a) Spring Chinook by 1 million fish by 2013 and 1.25 million by 2016
 - b) Bright Fall Chinook by 0.5 million fish by 2013 and 0.75 million by 2016
 - c) Coho by 1 million fish by 2013 and 4.8 million by 2016

Increasing artificial production provides the opportunity to offset the loss of commercial fishing opportunities in the mainstem of the Columbia River for Washington and Oregon commercial fishers. New or enhanced artificial production programs must be designed in a manner that maintains our ability to meet conservation and recovery objectives for wild stocks. Successful implementation of these programs will require a concerted, coordinated, and sustained effort by the states and stakeholders to secure the necessary funding.

- 6) **Adaptively Manage Fisheries.** The commissions shall review by January 31, 2015 or sooner the implementation of the fishery management actions and artificial production programs in the lower Columbia River. Management of non-tribal fisheries will be adaptive and adjustments may be made to sharing agreements if the commercial or recreational fishery expectations are not achieved. While recognizing the prioritization of recreational fisheries in the mainstem of the Columbia River, reconsideration of the sharing agreements may be considered under the following circumstances:
- a) Failure to meet conservation objectives.
 - b) Conflicts with terms of *U.S. v Oregon* management agreements with Columbia River tribes.
 - c) Biological, fiscal, and/or legal circumstances that delay or preclude implementation of alternative gear, buyback of commercial fishing licenses, and/or additional off-channel hatchery investments.
 - d) Significantly lower than expected returns of harvestable fish to off-channel sites.
 - e) Insufficient space within off-channel sites to accommodate the commercial fleet.
 - f) Significantly lower than expected commercial catches in the mainstem Columbia River using selective gears.
 - g) Significantly lower than expected economic benefits to commercial and recreational fishers.

Fishery Management

The WCWG recommends the following actions to enhance the management of fisheries in the Columbia River.

- 1) **Increase Management Certainty.** Implement outreach programs to increase understanding of recreational fishing rules, improved enforcement programs, and enhanced fishery monitoring to enhance the accounting of catch and fishing related mortality, increase management certainty, and ensure conservation effectiveness.

- 2) **Improve Management Tools.** Explore and develop alternative approaches to improve pre-season forecasts of run size and timing, in-season updates of run-size estimates, and in-season estimates of the harvest impacts by fishery. Dedicate additional resources and expertise to this task.

Fishery Objectives and Sharing

The WFWC recommendations for fishery objectives and sharing are provided in attachments A through F.

Attachment A. Spring Chinook Fishery

Sharing Metric: Nontribal incidental-take of ESA-listed upriver spring Chinook

Objectives:

- 1) Meet terms of *U.S. v. Oregon* management agreements with Columbia River tribes.
- 2) Promote conservation and recovery of wild spring Chinook stocks.
- 3) Maximize recreational fishing opportunities for hatchery spring Chinook in the mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam in a manner consistent with policies and agreements regarding the sharing of spring Chinook throughout the Columbia River basin.
- 4) Implement commercial fisheries in off-channel areas to provide revenue to the commercial fishery and supply markets for spring Chinook.

Fishing Year	Recreational Fishery		Commercial Fishery		
	Share	Location	Share	Location	Gear
Existing Policy	~60-65%	Mainstem Columbia River and Snake River	~35-40%	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam and off-channel areas	Tangle Net Gill Net
2013	70%	“	30%	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	Tangle Net
				Off-Channel Areas	Tangle Net Gill Net
2014	70%	“	30%	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	Tangle Net
				Off-Channel Areas	Tangle Net Gill Net
2015	70%	“	30%	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	Tangle Net
				Off-Channel Areas	Tangle Net Gill Net
2016	70%	“	30%	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	Tangle Net
				Off-Channel Areas	Tangle Net Gill Net
2017	80%	“	20% ¹	Off-channel and bubble areas of the Columbia River	Tangle Net Gill Net Beach Seine Purse Seine

¹ Share not included in preseason catch buffer.

Attachment B. Summer Chinook Fishery

Sharing Metric: Nontribal share of summer Chinook below Priest Rapids Dam

Objectives:

- 1) Meet terms of *U.S. v. Oregon* management agreements with Columbia River tribes.
- 2) Meet terms of agreements with the United Tribes of the Colville Reservation.
- 3) Promote conservation and recovery of wild summer Chinook stocks.
- 4) Maximize recreational fishing opportunities for hatchery summer Chinook in the mainstem Columbia River below Priest Rapids Dam in a manner consistent with policies and agreements regarding the sharing of summer Chinook throughout the Columbia River basin.

Fishing Year	Recreational Fishery		Commercial Fishery		
	Share	Location	Share	Location	Gear
Existing Policy	50%	Mainstem Columbia River below Priest Rapids Dam	50%	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam	Gill Net
2013	70%	Mainstem Columbia River below Priest Rapids Dam	30%	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam	Gill Net
2014	80%	"	20%	"	"
2015	80%	"	20%	"	"
2016	80%	"	20%	"	"
2017	100%	"	0% ²	NA	NA

¹ To offset reductions in mainstem commercial harvest of summer Chinook, Oregon will enhance the fisheries for Select Area Bright Fall Chinook.

² The commissions shall review by January 31, 2015 the need to provide a share of summer Chinook to the commercial fishery as incidental impacts in off-channel areas.

Attachment C. Tule Fall Chinook Fishery

Sharing Metric: Nontribal incidental-take of ESA-listed tule fall Chinook

Objectives:

- 1) Meet terms of *U.S. v. Oregon* management agreements with Columbia River tribes.
- 2) Promote conservation and recovery of wild fall Chinook stocks.
- 3) Maximize recreational fishing opportunities for hatchery fall Chinook in the mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam in a manner consistent with policies and agreements regarding the sharing of fall Chinook throughout the Columbia River basin.
- 4) Implement commercial fisheries in off-channel areas to provide revenue to the commercial fishery and supply markets for fall Chinook.
- 5) Implement commercial fisheries with alternative gear in the mainstem of the Columbia River to remove excess hatchery-origin Chinook, provide revenue to the commercial fishery, and supply markets for fall Chinook.

Fishing Year	Recreational Fishery		Commercial Fishery		
	Share	Location	Share	Location	Gear
Existing Policy	~50%	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	~50%	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam and off-channel areas	Gill Net
2013	≤70%	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	≥30%	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam and off-channel areas	Gill Net Pilot Beach Seine Pilot Purse Seine
2014	≤70%	“	≥30%	“	Gill Net Pilot Beach Seine Pilot Purse Seine
2015	≤70%	“	≥30%	“	“
2016	≤70%	“	≥30%	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam	Beach Seine Purse Seine
				Off-channel areas	Gill Net
2017	≤80%	“	≥20%	“	“

Attachment D. Upriver Bright Chinook Fishery

Sharing Metric: Nontribal incidental-take of ESA-listed Snake River wild fall Chinook

Objectives:

- 1) Meet terms of *U.S. v. Oregon* management agreements with Columbia River tribes.
- 2) Promote conservation and recovery of wild fall Chinook stocks.
- 3) Maximize recreational fishing opportunities for fall Chinook in the mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam in a manner consistent with policies and agreements regarding the sharing of fall Chinook throughout the Columbia River basin.
- 4) Implement commercial fisheries with large mesh in the mainstem of the Columbia River in zones 4 and 5 (upstream of the Lewis River to remove excess hatchery-origin bright Chinook, harvest surplus wild bright Chinook, provide revenue to the commercial fishery, and supply markets for high quality fall Chinook.

Fishing Year	Recreational Fishery		Commercial Fishery		
	Share	Location	Share	Location	Gear
Existing Policy	~50%	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	~50%	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam	Gill Net
2013	Up to Tule Limit	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	Up to Tule Limit	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam	Large Mesh Net Pilot Beach Seine Pilot Purse Seine
2014	“	“	“	“	Large Mesh Net Pilot Beach Seine Pilot Purse Seine
2015	“	“	“	“	“
2016	“	“	“	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam	Beach Seine Purse Seine
				Above Lewis River	Large Mesh Net
2017	“	“	“	“	“

Attachment E. Coho Fishery

Sharing Metric: Nontribal incidental-take of ESA-listed coho

Objectives:

- 1) Meet terms of *U.S. v. Oregon* management agreements with Columbia River tribes.
- 2) Promote conservation and recovery of wild coho stocks.
- 3) Implement commercial fisheries with alternative gear in the mainstem of the Columbia River to remove excess hatchery-origin coho, provide revenue to the commercial fishery, and supply markets for coho.
- 4) Implement commercial fisheries in off-channel areas to provide revenue to the commercial fishery and supply markets for coho.
- 5) Provide recreational fishing opportunities for coho in the mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam in a manner consistent with policies and agreements regarding the sharing of coho throughout the Columbia River basin.

Fishing Year	Recreational Fishery		Commercial Fishery		
	Share	Location	Share	Location	Gear
Existing Policy	-	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	-	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam and off-channel areas	Gill Net
2013	¹	"	¹	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam and off-channel areas	Gill Net Pilot Tangle Net Pilot Beach Seine Pilot Purse Seine
2014	"	"	"	"	"
2015	"	"	"	"	"
2016	"	"	"	"	Tangle Net Beach Seine Purse Seine
2017	²	"	²	"	"

¹ Maintain current sharing except provide sufficient additional impacts to the commercial fishery to implement the pilot alternative gear fisheries.

² Assign commercial fisheries a sufficient share of the ESA-impact for Lower Columbia Natural coho to implement off-channel coho fisheries, fall Chinook fisheries as described in attachments C and D, and alternative gear fisheries to reduce the number of hatchery-origin coho in natural spawning areas. Assign the balance to mainstem recreational fisheries. If these recreational fisheries are unable to use all of the ESA-impact for Lower Columbia Natural coho, assign the remainder to mainstem commercial coho fisheries.

Attachment F. Sturgeon Fishery

Sharing Metric: Allowable harvest of sturgeon below Bonneville Dam minus a 10% conservation buffer

Objectives:

- 1) Promote conservation and recovery of sturgeon ¹.
- 2) Provide recreational fishing opportunities for sturgeon in the mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam.
- 3) Implement commercial fisheries in off-channel areas to provide revenue to the commercial fishery and supply markets for sturgeon.

Fishing Year	Recreational Fishery		Commercial Fishery		
	Share	Location	Share	Location	Gear
Existing Policy	80%	Mainstem Columbia below Bonneville Dam	20%	Mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam and off-channel areas	Large Mesh Net
2013	"	"	"	"	"
2014	"	"	"	"	"
2015	"	"	"	"	"
2016	"	"	"	"	"
2017	"	"	"	"	"

1 The commissions will implement nonretention regulations for recreational and commercial fisheries for sturgeon in 2013 if the November, 2012 abundance estimates do not increase relative to 2011.