



SB 42 Re: Columbia River Basin Endorsement

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, January 2019

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The Columbia River Fisheries Enhancement Fund was established by the legislature via Senate Bill 830 in 2013 to provide funding to implement measures that enhance fisheries, optimize the economic benefits of fisheries, and advance native fish conservation related to the Columbia River fish management and reform (CR Reform) policy. The State of Washington has a similar policy necessary for joint-state management of non-tribal fisheries in the Columbia River. As part of Oregon's legislation, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission was authorized to charge an additional fee for recreational angling for salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon in the Columbia Basin, via the Columbia River Basin Endorsement (CRBE), to generate revenues for the enhancement fund. The fee established by the Commission is \$9.75/year or \$1/day, and generates approximately \$2.5 M/biennium for implementation of the CR Reform policy.

Activities supported by the CRBE are foundational to achieving the overall goals of the CR Reform policy. Funds from this source have been used to increase harvests in off-channel commercial fisheries by increasing hatchery production in those areas. This increased production in off-channel areas was necessary to offset fishery allocation shifts toward recreational fisheries and the removal of non-tribal gillnet fisheries in the mainstem during spring and summer. The CRBE funds also provide better monitoring of both commercial and recreational fisheries, improve management of salmon, steelhead and sturgeon in the Columbia, and increase enforcement by the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife unit.

Per ORS 508.980 the fee and the fund will sunset January 2, 2022. Senate Bill 42 would remove the sunset date from the Columbia River Fisheries Enhancement Fund. Continuing the Columbia River Basin Endorsement fee will provide stable future funding for production of salmon for harvest in off-channel areas, and monitoring fisheries to assess performance, ensure ESA compliance, and inform season management decisions; all necessary to continue implementation of the CR Reform policy.

Background on the Columbia River Fisheries Reform Policy

As an alternative to a citizen's initiative seeking to ban non-tribal commercial gill nets and tangle nets in all inland waters of the State, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted a Columbia River Fisheries Management and Reform (CR Reform) policy and associated rules in 2013. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted a similar policy. The objectives of the Commission's CR Reform framework are to: maintain or enhance the overall economic viability of non-tribal commercial and recreational fisheries; optimize overall economic benefits to the State; promote conservation of native fish; and promote orderly and concurrent fisheries with the State of Washington.

Key elements of CR Reform included: shifting allocations to provide a stronger recreational priority in the mainstem Columbia River; enhancing off-channel hatchery releases to increase commercial harvest in those areas; phasing gillnets out of mainstem commercial fisheries and limiting their use to off-channel areas; developing alternative gears and techniques for commercial mainstem fisheries; and strengthening conservation of native fish.

In 2013, Senate Bill 830 was passed by the Oregon Legislature (ORS 508.796 and 508.980) allowing authorization of alternative (non-gillnet) commercial fishing gears, and establishing overarching objectives for CR Reform rules, provisions for adaptive management, a Transition Fund to support development of a county program to aid commercial fishers harmed by CR Reform rules, and a general fund appropriation and Enhancement Fund to aid implementation. The Commission was granted the authority to create a fee (endorsement) on recreational fishers to support the Enhancement Fund.

Funding dedicated to CR Reform activities for the 2017-2019 biennium is approximately \$3.5M, and is comprised of \$1M general fund and \$2.5M in license fees from the Columbia Basin Endorsement. During the 2013-2016 transition period for CR Reform, combined funds supported additional hatchery releases into off-channel areas, research on off-channel area expansions, research on alternative commercial gears, and monitoring of fisheries. Per 2017 Commission adaptive management actions, current expenditures are shifting with more of the funds being expended on further additional hatchery releases in off-channel areas and less on additional research. In 2018, Clatsop County requested \$496,745 from the Transition Fund to reimburse the commercial fleet for economic losses and gear changes accrued to that point. The funds were released to the county in November 2018.

The CR Reform policy established a timeline for implementation, including a four year transition period from 2013-2016 to evaluate critical assumptions of the policy and phase in actions. Results from the transition period were mixed. In general: allocation shifts to sport fisheries were implemented as scheduled; hatchery enhancements in off-channel areas were met except where federal Mitchell Act reductions were required; time and area expansions for off-channel commercial fisheries have been implemented, though no 'new' sites have been established in either state. However, the success of non-gillnet alternative mainstem gears (primarily seine gears in the fall) was limited and constrained by higher than expected catch and/or total handle mortality of non-targeted fish, particularly steelhead (including ESA-listed wild steelhead). Robust fish runs helped ensure that commercial economics during the transition period generally exceeded expectations and the pre-reform baseline, although commercial economics could have been even higher without the reforms.

In 2017, following a comprehensive review of transition period results, both the Oregon and Washington commissions took independent adaptive management actions on CR Reform. The Washington Commission adopted spring and summer allocations that match those in Oregon, and fall Chinook allocations that differ from Oregon. Both states prohibited use of gillnets in mainstem fisheries in spring and summer. The Washington Commission eliminated the potential for any mainstem spring commercial fisheries, while the Oregon Commission policy allows use of tangle nets in the mainstem in the spring under limited circumstances. The Oregon Commission policy allows continued use of mainstem gillnets in the fall (upriver of the Lewis River) to reduce risk to commercial economics. The Washington Commission allowed fall gillnet use for 2017-2018 only, and directed WDFW to conduct an additional review during 2018. The Oregon Commission adopted additional hatchery enhancements to Oregon off-channel areas, both to offset lost off-channel production of Coho salmon due to federal Mitchell Act program cuts and to increase overall commercial economic benefits in the spring season.

The most significant differences between current Oregon and Washington policies are in the fall, where commercial gear and allocation policies between the two states remain non-concurrent. The two Commissions held a joint meeting in November 2018 to begin discussions to achieve concurrency. A small workgroup was formed and began discussions January 17, 2019. The workgroup is not a decision-making body, and each Commission will review and consider proposals from the subgroup as part of their normal Commission processes.