Columbia River Salmon Management Dreams vs. Reality

- Today I intend to show that:

1. Sport Priority already existed in Columbia River salmon management before this Policy was promoted in 2012
2. Season lengths are primarily a function of run size and ESA limitations, not sharing with the commercial fleet, so there was little opportunity to expand recreational salmon seasons
3. Results so far show little gain in angler trips despite overall good returns, including some record runs in summer and fall and spring returns that matched or exceeded prediction in three out of four years
4. License sales have not increased so the small gain in trips just means more fishing time for the same group of anglers
5. The gillnet fishery on the Columbia has been a selective fishery for many years and both States have acknowledged that in past publications
6. Tools were already in place to manage for conservation and to serve the needs of both recreational and commercial fishermen. Those tools were developed with a focus on recovery of weak runs while allowing harvest that stayed within federal management guidelines and while helping to harvest hatchery fish and healthy wild stocks. They were based on science, not politics.

Pre-Policy Matrix for Spring Chinook ESA Impact Sharing Between Sport and Commercial Fisheries

Matrix for allocating upriver Spring Chinook ESA impacts based on OFWC and WFWC Policy		
Run Size of Upriver Columbia Spring Chinook	**Run Size of Willamette Spring Chinook**	
	Low (<50,000)	**High (>50,000)**
Very Low (<33,000)	Share = 80/15%	Share = 70/25%
	Buffer = 30% of sport fishery impact + 25% of commercial fishery impact	Buffer = 30% of sport fishery impact + 25% of commercial fishery impact
Low (33,000 – 55,000)	Share = 70/25%	Share = 65/30%
	Buffer = 30% of sport fishery impact + 25% of commercial fishery impact	Buffer = 30% of sport fishery impact + 25% of commercial fishery impact
Medium-High (55,000 – 271,000)	Share = 65/30%	Share = **60/35% (base)**
	Buffer = 30% of sport fishery impact + 25% of commercial fishery impact	Buffer = 20% of sport fishery impact + 40% of commercial fishery impact
Very High (>271,000)	Share = 55/40%	Share = 50/45%
	Buffer = 20% of sport fishery impact + 40% of commercial fishery impact	Buffer = 20% of sport fishery impact + 40% of commercial fishery impact

- The pre-Policy management scheme for spring Chinook already reserved 50%-80% of the harvestable portion of the run for recreational fisheries in the Columbia and Snake Rivers, utilizing a matrix that looked at both upriver and Willamette predicted run sizes. In 2009-2016, most years would have been in the 60%/35% “base” ratio.

Pre-Policy Guideline for Summer Chinook Harvest Allocation

Non-Treaty Harvest Allocations and framework for Upper Columbia Summer Chinook				
River mouth run size[1]	Harvest guide Above PRD[2]	Harvest regime below PRD	Description of expected fisheries above PRD	Proportion > PRD to Colville Tribes
0 – 29,000	> 90%	No directed harvest	C&S for Colville and Wanapum, potential selective recreational	90%
29,001 – 50,000	90%	Limited recreational	C&S for Colville and Wanapum, limited recreational	70%
50,001 – 60,000	90% -70% [3]	Recreational and/or commercial	C&S for Wanapum and Colville, recreational	50%
60,001 – 75,000	70 - 65%	Recreational and/or commercial	C&S for Wanapum and Colville, recreational	50%
75,001 – 100,000	65% - 60%	Recreational and/or commercial	C&S for Wanapum and Colville, recreational	55%
100,001+	60%	Recreational and/or commercial	C&S for Wanapum and Colville, recreational	>55% [4]

The pre-Policy allocation scheme for summer Chinook already reserved 60% or more of the available harvest for fisheries above Priest Rapids Dam, which is upstream from the Tri-Cities.

Pre-Policy Goal for Fall Buoy-10 Sport Season Below Bonneville Dam

- The Buoy 10 fishery will begin on August 1 with a two fish/one Chinook daily limit through September 3 (Labor Day). From September 4-30, only hatchery coho and hatchery steelhead may be retained. From October 1 through December 31 the daily limit will be two fish/two Chinook, with retention including Chinook, hatchery coho and hatchery steelhead.

Pre-Policy Goal for Fall Mainstem Sport Season Below Bonneville Dam

- The mainstem sport fishery below Bonneville Dam will begin August 1 with a two fish/one Chinook daily limit. From the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line upstream to the Lewis River, the fishery will be open for Chinook retention through September 9. From September 10 through September 30, Chinook retention will only be allowed upstream of the Lewis River, but the daily limit can include two Chinook. A mark-selective fishery (MSF) for fall Chinook may occur from September 10 through 16 downstream of the Lewis River.

ODFW Staff Table Comparing pre and post-Policy Angler Trips Below Bonneville

Table 21—Summary of gains in fishing days and angler-trips due to allocation changes for lower Columbia River recreational Chinook fisheries, by year and season, 2013-15.

			2013	2014	2015
Spring Chinook		Fishing Days Gained	0	5	2
		Angler-Trips Gained	0	10,788	10,321
Summer Chinook		Fishing Days Gained	0	0	0
		Angler-Trips Gained	0	0	0
Fall Chinook	*Buoy 10*	Non-MSF Days Gained	5	6	2
		Angler-Trips Gained	4,560	1,015	907
	Below Lewis River	Non-MSF Days Gained	3	6	5
		Angler-Trips Gained	2,470	2,265	10,402
	Fall Total	Non-MSF Days Gained	8	12	7
		Angler-Trips Gained	7,030	3,280	11,309
All Seasons Total		**Fishing Days Gained**	**8**	**17**	**9**
		Angler-Trips Gained	**7,030**	**14,068**	**21,630**

ODFW Staff Graphic Comparing pre and post-Policy Angler Trips Below Bonneville

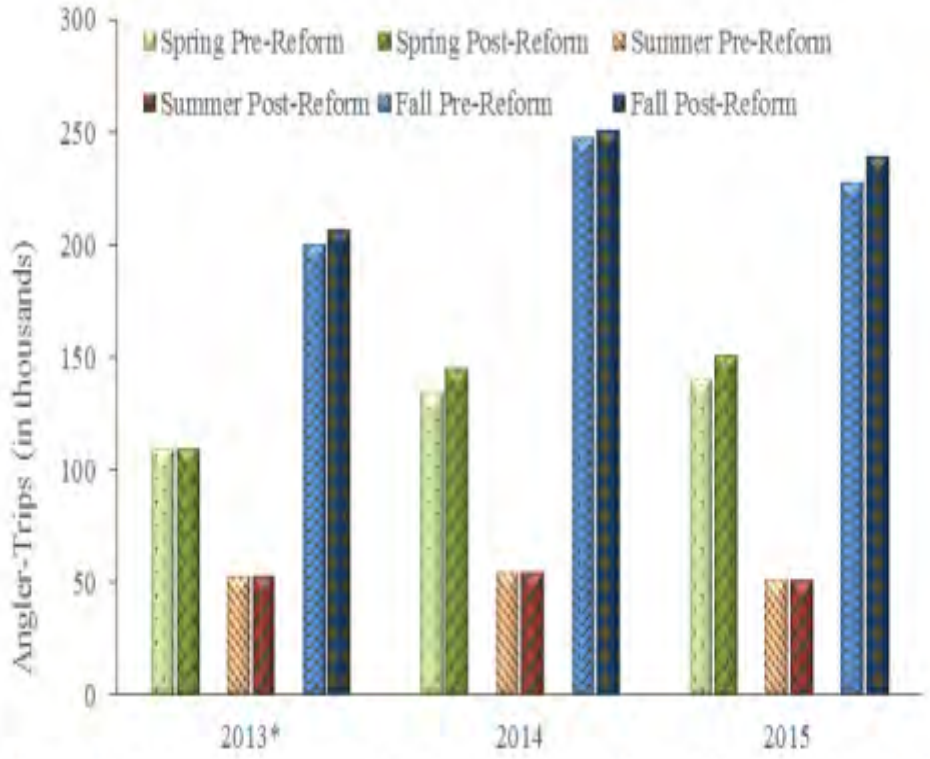
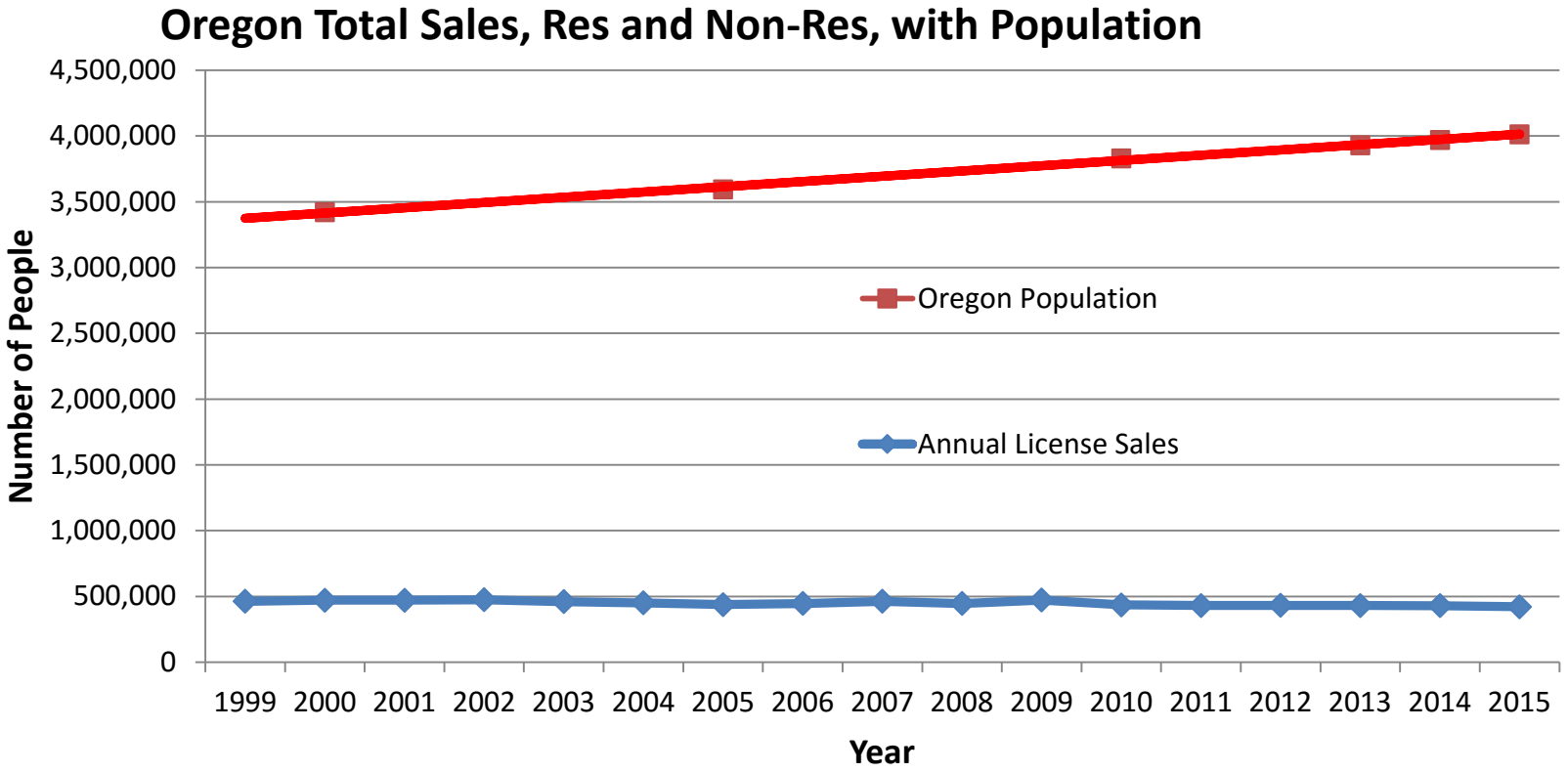
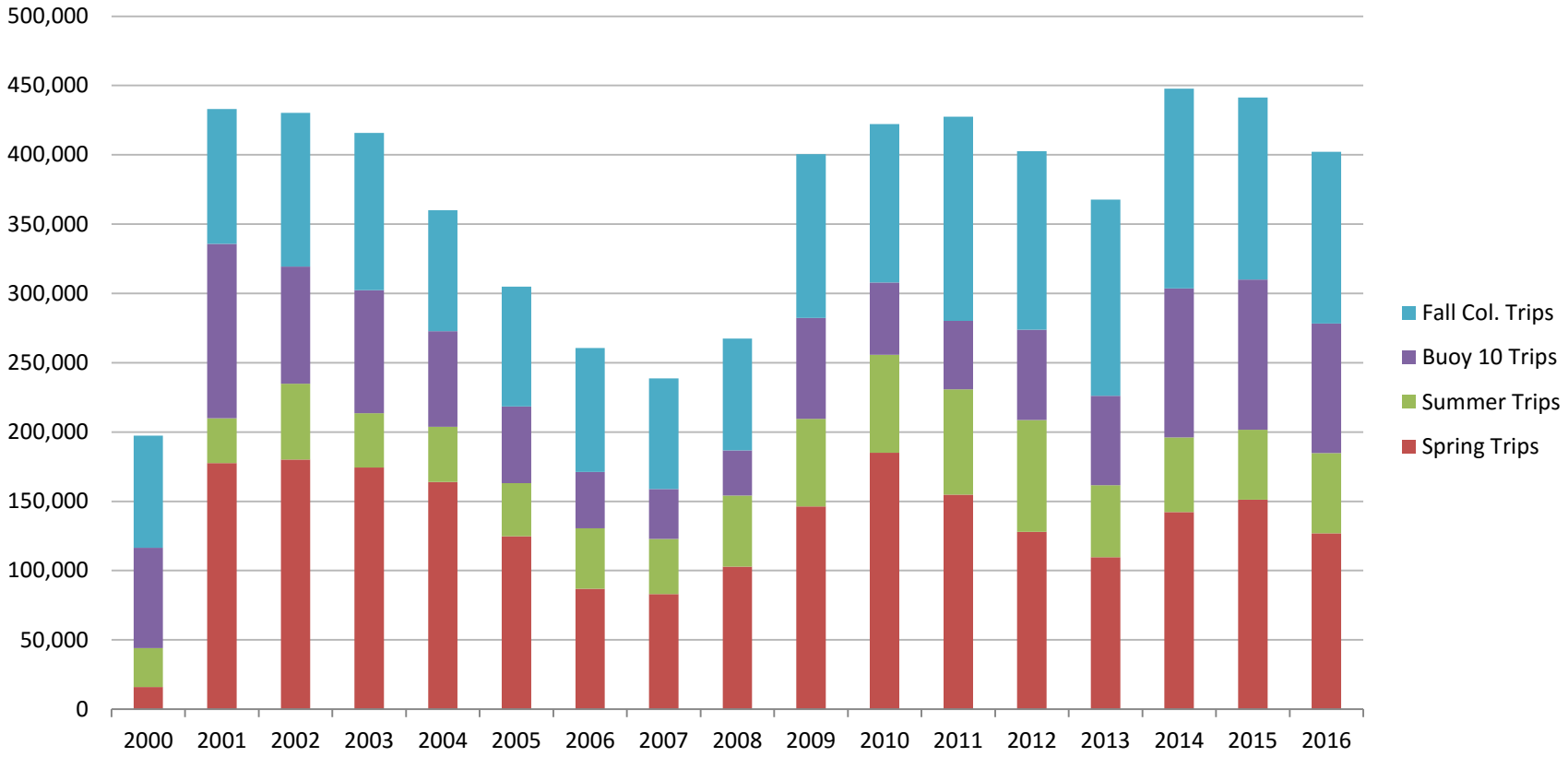


Figure 6—Changes in seasonal angler effort due to Harvest Reform-related allocation increases for the 2013-15 lower Columbia recreational fisheries. *No change in recreational spring allocation in 2013 due to court ordered stay of harvest reform policy.

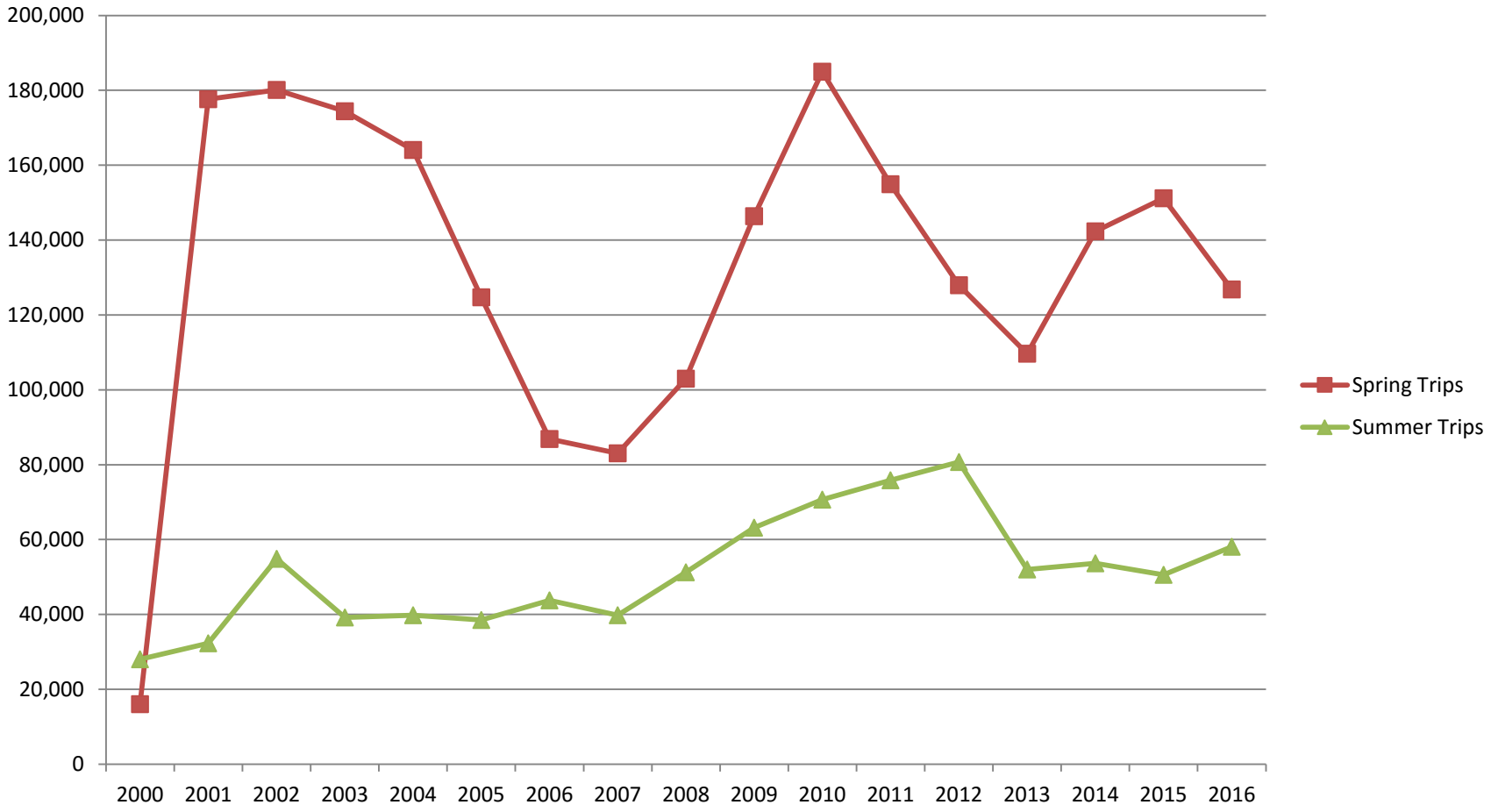
Oregon Population Growth vs. Angler License sales, 1999-2015



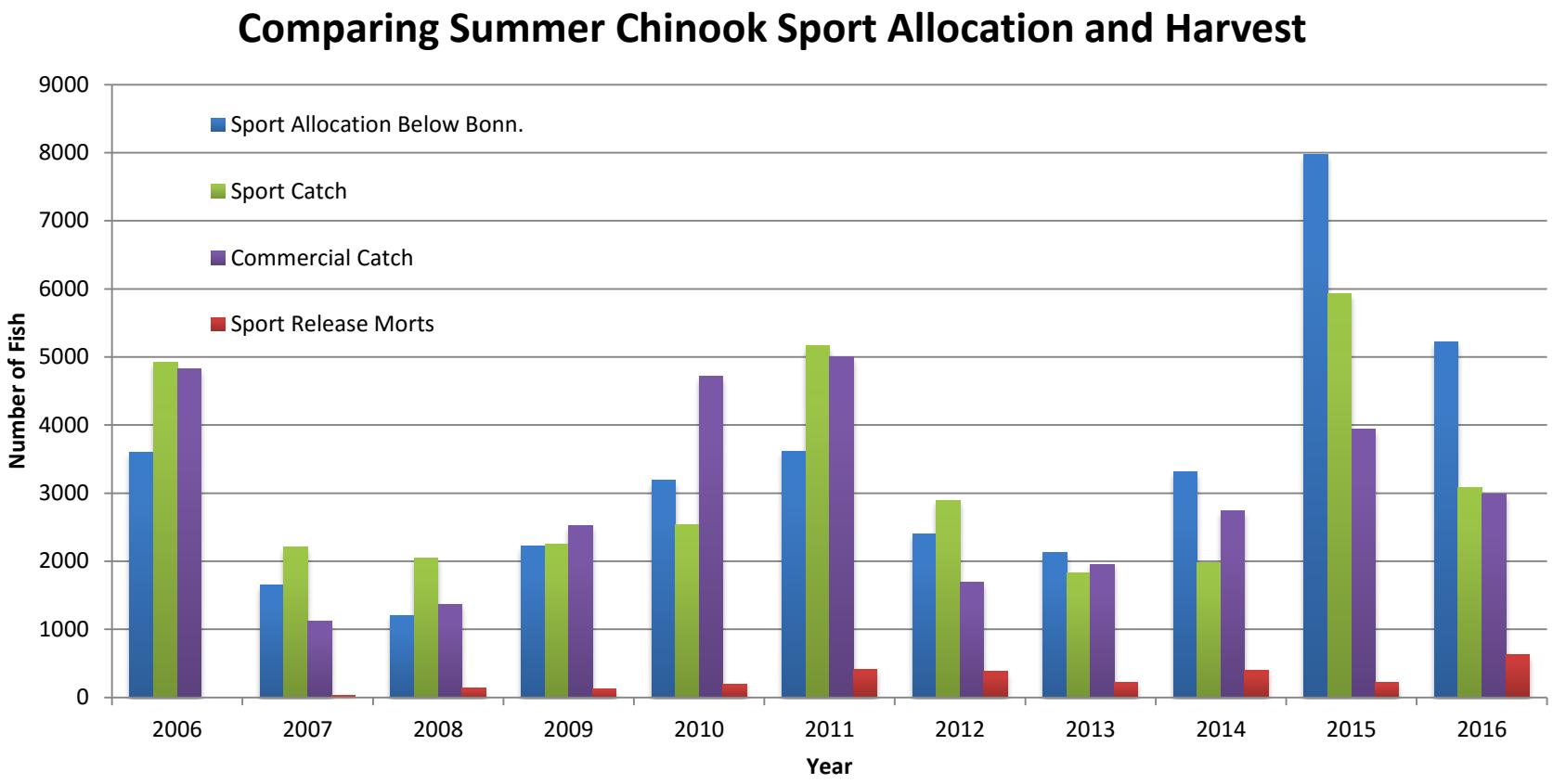
Angler Trips for Spring, Summer, Buoy-10 and Mainstem Below Bonneville, 2000-2016



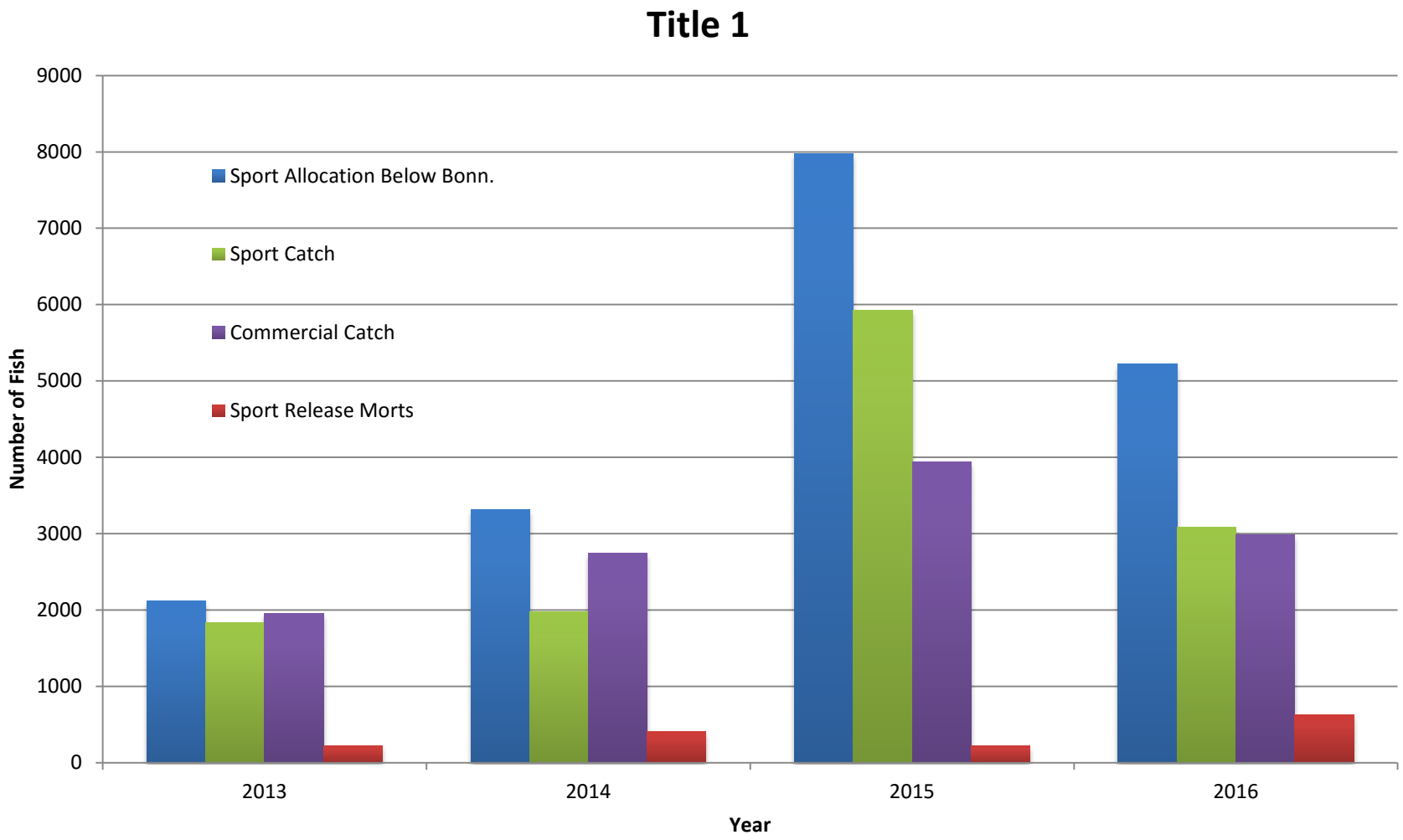
Spring and Summer Season Angler Trips, 2000-2016



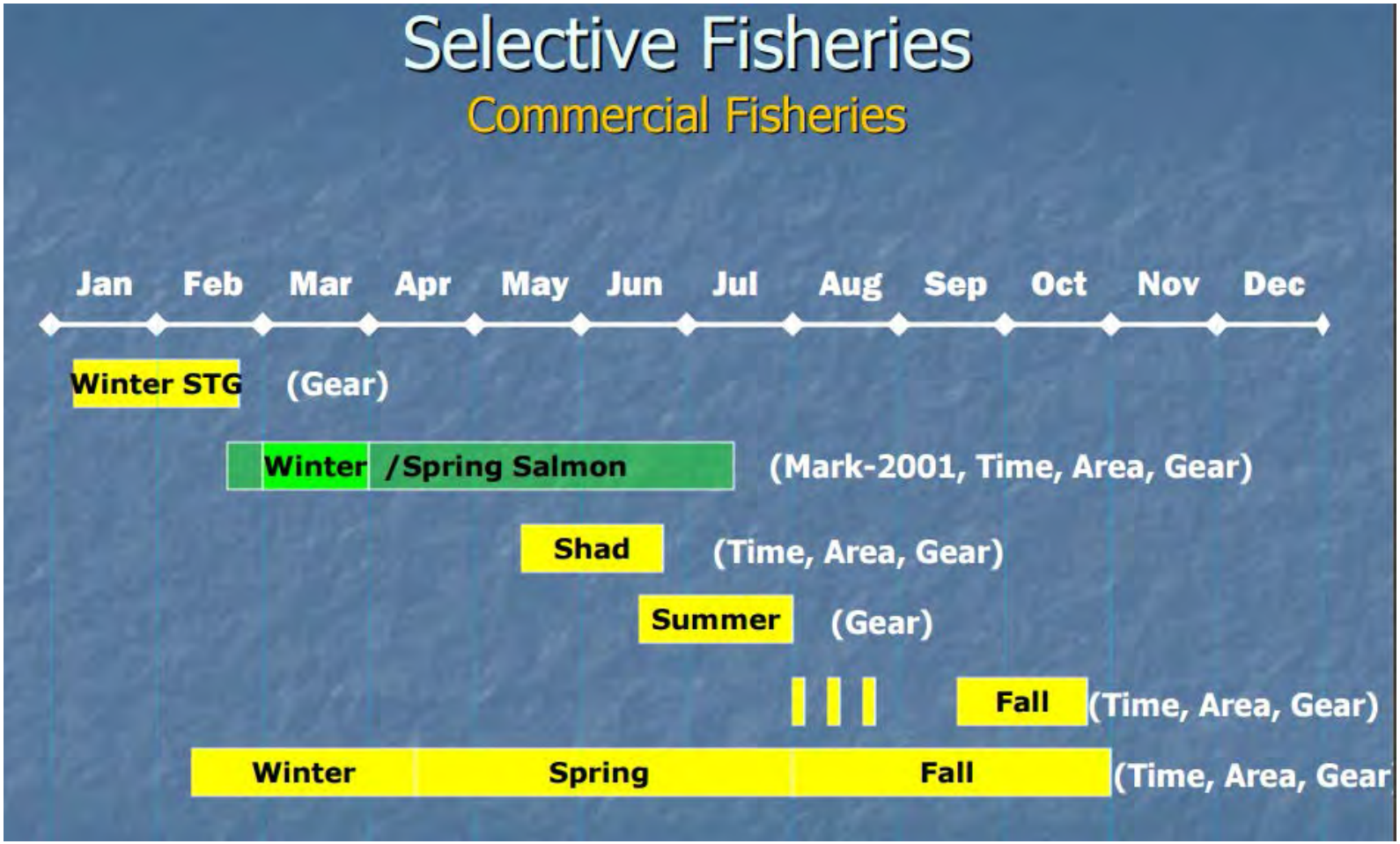
Utilization of Summer Chinook Allocations Below Bonneville



Utilization of Summer Chinook Allocation 2013-2016



ODFW Graphic of Application of Selectivity in Columbia River Commercial Fishery

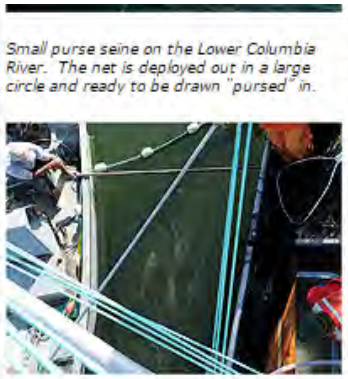


WDFW Discussion of Application of Selectivity in Washington State Commercial Fisheries

What is selective fishing?

One way fishers can contribute to the recovery of weak stocks is by the use of selective fishing techniques. Selective fishing is the ability of a fishing operation to avoid non-target species or stocks, or when encountered, to release those animals alive and unharmed. Successful selective fishing requires that two objectives be met. First, the conservation goal must be achieved for the species or stock of concern, and second, there is a harvest goal that must be met to make the fishery economically viable.

The two components of selective fishing, avoidance, and live release, are managed very differently.



Small purse seine on the Lower Columbia River. The net is deployed out in a large circle and ready to be drawn "pursed" in.

The net is pulled in tighter, bringing any salmon in the net closer to the boat.

Fish are able to swim freely while crew members sort through them.

Salmon can be sorted via dip net enabling us to release wild fish unharmed.

Avoidance

As salmon migrate back to their spawning grounds, they spend part of the time intermingled with different species and stocks, and part of the time separated from other species or stocks. To protect weak stocks in the presence of commercial fisheries, all of the fleets in Washington are presently managed by time and area closures that restrict the fleet to particular areas or times so that they avoid weak stocks or species. From this perspective, our commercial fleets are already fishing very selectively.

Avoidance very effectively meets the conservation goal because few or no encounters with fishing gears means very low harvest-related mortality. When there are few weak stocks to protect, time and area closures can also effectively meet the harvest goal. However, when many stocks require protection, time and area closures can severely limit fishing and make it very difficult for our fishers to make a living. This is the situation we have in Washington. Our fleets are experiencing unprecedented restrictions even though we have many healthy stocks of wild and hatchery salmon returning. Additionally, because there is insufficient harvest on the hatchery runs, thousands of excess, or "surplus", fish return to our hatcheries or to the spawning grounds rather than being caught for their intended purpose: fisheries.

Live Release

Selective fishing by avoidance means that there are healthy populations of fish that are not harvested because they are intermingled with weak stocks or species that require protection. If we wish to maintain harvest on the healthy stocks, we must find ways to do so that will allow live release of the non-target species or stock.

Because the modern methods of commercial fishing did not focus on live release of non-target species or stocks, efforts are underway to modify our current fishing gears and practices so that the fish are captured live and can be sorted for harvest or release.

Review

- Sport Priority already existed in Columbia River salmon management
- The goals for sport fisheries prior to 2013 were essentially the same as they have been with the Policy
- The Policy has not led to increased license sales or increased angler trips. Some seasons have had lower trip totals than prior to 2013.
- The sport fishery has not been able to utilize much of the harvestable fish transferred from the commercial fishery
- The gillnet fishery on the lower Columbia was already a selective fishery, using changes in time/gear/area to target strong runs and avoid impacting weaker runs
- Adaptive Management has long been in play on the Columbia by developing and utilizing tools such as the spring Chinook matrix, the tule matrix and the coho matrix. Returning to those approaches, rather than trying to dictate allocation, would be the proper next step for future salmon management on the Columbia. We should return to a focus on science, not politics.