



State of Washington
Fish & Wildlife Commission

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March 15, 2017

Mr. Michael V. Finley, Chairman
Oregon State Fish and Wildlife Commission
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302

Dear Chairman Finley:

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (WFWC) appreciated receiving your letter of March 7, 2017, regarding fishery and hatchery management in the Columbia River by the states of Oregon and Washington. Given the importance of the issues discussed in your letter, and the urgency necessitated by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) upcoming meeting on March 17, 2017, I am providing a response reflecting my sense of the issues at stake.

We are mindful of the points made in Governor Brown's letter of February 9, 2017, emphasizing the importance of concurrent rules and expressing support for maintaining the commitments that our commissions worked so hard to collaboratively develop in 2012-2013. Washington also appreciates that the letter recognized that both the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) staff recommendation and the policy adopted by the WFWC successfully balance multiple objectives and provide a clear and enforceable path forward.

We have summarized below our understanding of the key features of each of those options with respect to the topics raised in your letter:

Element	Current Concurrence	ODFW Staff Proposal	WFWC Updated Policy
Spring Chinook Tangle Net Fishery	No	Priority for use of the commercial allocation is to support full fishing in off-channel fisheries. Commercial mainstem openers with selective gear (tangle net) may occur only after the run update if impacts are available.	No mainstem tangle net commercial fishery.
Summer Chinook Gillnet Fishery	Yes	Any commercial allocation not used in off-channel fisheries is available for mainstem harvest using non-gill net selective gears and fishing techniques (currently undetermined) that minimize bycatch impacts on sturgeon, steelhead and sockeye.	
Fall Chinook Commercial Share	No	≥ 30%	≥ 25%

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Fall Chinook salmon were the topic of considerable discussion in Washington and a lack of concurrence remains between the ODFW staff proposal and the updated Washington policy. Let me take an opportunity to provide you with a bit of context for the WFWC decision that may be useful in the deliberations of your commission.

The WFWC updates to the policy for fall Chinook were taken in the spirit of finding a compromise solution that could be supported by both commissions, adaptively managing the fisheries, and remaining true to our commitment to a new vision for Columbia River management. Elements of that vision, which were adopted in Oregon rules and in the WFWC policy, include:

- 1) Promote the recovery of ESA-listed species and the conservation of wild stocks of salmon and steelhead;
- 2) Prioritize recreational fisheries in the mainstem and commercial fisheries in the off-channel areas of the lower Columbia River;
- 3) Seek to phase out the use of non-selective gillnets in the non-tribal commercial fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River, and transition gillnet use to off-channel areas;
- 4) Enhance the economic benefits of off-channel commercial fisheries in a manner consistent with conservation and wild stock recovery objectives; and
- 5) In a manner that is consistent with conservation and does not impair the resource, seek to enhance the overall economic well-being and stability of Columbia River fisheries.

Consistent with that vision, the revised WFWC policy provides guidance to staff to increase the commercial fall Chinook share from 20 percent to 25 percent (a 25 percent increase) and explicitly provides for a gillnet fishery above the Lewis River targeting Upriver Bright Chinook salmon in 2017 and 2018. These policy modifications were taken after review of extensive staff analyses and comments by hundreds of stakeholders.

Columbia River management reform is a difficult issue, but our states have a long history of working collaboratively and have previously solved equally challenging fishery, hatchery, and other natural resources issues.

Washington remains committed to that approach, and you can be assured that the WFWC will carefully consider any proposal supported by the OFWC as a whole that is consistent with the vision for Columbia River management reform and within the sideboards of Governor Brown's letter.

I thank you again for reaching out to the WFWC and for all of your efforts in support of Columbia River management reform.

Sincerely,



Bradley Smith, Ph.D.

Chair

cc: Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission
JT Austin, Senior Policy Advisor, Washington Governor's Office
Jason Miner, Natural Resources Policy Manager, Oregon Governor's Office

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