

Implementing the Adaptive Management Intent of the 2013 Columbia River Policy

During the Commission's comprehensive review process of the [Columbia River Basin Salmon Management Policy, No-C3620](#) (Policy), the Joint-State Policy Review Committee process, and the ongoing Washington Policy Workgroup process, there has been repeated public testimony urging the Commission to "honor the commitment" made in the original Policy to permanently remove gill net gear from the Columbia River mainstem, and to maintain the 80% recreational/20% commercial allocation of allowable impacts on Chinook and steelhead stocks for directed fisheries on Spring, Summer, and Fall Chinook. However, as set forth below, no such unconditional commitment is expressed in the Policy.

In adopting the Policy in 2013, the Commission recognized that there was "uncertainty" in "some aspects" of the Policy affecting the commercial fishery, including the ability to develop and implement alternative fishing gear to replace gill net gear in the mainstem, the securing of funding for enhanced hatchery production, and the expansion or development of off-channel fishing areas for gill net gear to offset the loss of revenue to the commercial fishing industry as result of the removal of gill nets from the mainstem fishery. Policy, at p.1. Given these uncertainties, the Commission inserted language in the Policy stating that the "Policy will be adaptive and adjustments may be made to mainstem fisheries if policy objectives, including catch or economic expectations for commercial or recreational fisheries, are not achieved consistent with the principles of this plan." Policy, at p.11. The Policy goes on to state: "[i]f these expectations are not achieved, efforts will be made to determine why and to identify actions necessary to correct course." Policy, at p.11. The Policy sets forth six circumstances where the Commission may reconsider the fisheries management measures called for in the Policy, which include: (1) lower than anticipated catch and economic expectations to the commercial salmon industry; (2) insufficient space within off channel sites to accommodate the commercial fleet; (3) biological, fiscal, and/or legal circumstances that delay or preclude implementation of alternative fishing gear, buyback of commercial fishing permits, and/or additional off channel hatchery investments; (4) management objectives are not achieved for commercial or recreational fisheries; (5) conflicts with terms of U.S. v. Oregon management agreements with Columbia River Tribes; or (6) failure to meet conservation objectives. Policy, at p.11.

These six items and the achievement of other stated Policy purposes and goals were thoroughly evaluated as part of the comprehensive five-year review of the Policy. The review found that the first four of these six circumstances occurred. See [Comprehensive Evaluation of the Columbia River Basin Salmon Management Policy C-3620, 2013-2017](#).

The Joint-State Policy Review Committee process (PRC) also included a review and analysis of these six considerations and began work on the development of a set of recommended changes to the Policy to present to the Washington and Oregon Commissions to address the deficiencies of the Policy identified in the comprehensive review and by the PRC. The Washington Policy Workgroup is continuing this work and is currently scheduled to submit its recommendations for changes to the Policy for public review and comment on June 10, 2020. The Washington Commission is scheduled to take final action on these recommendations at the August 2020 Commission meeting. As directed by the Policy, the Commission will consider the Working Group's recommendations for changes to the Policy to correct deficiencies identified in the Policy, and to successfully achieve the stated purpose of the Policy regarding the economic well-being of the fishery. Thus, the current process to reconsider phasing out gill net fishing gear and the 80%/20% allocation shifts is consistent with the stated purpose and adaptive management provisions of the Policy adopted in 2013.