

March 11, 2020 Columbia River Fishery Policy Workgroup Meeting
Meeting Summary

The Columbia River Fishery Policy Workgroup (CR WG) met March 11, 2020 by conference call and webinar, in replacement of the in-person meeting scheduled for Kennewick, Washington, due to concerns related to the coronavirus emergency declaration. Workgroup Members Kehoe and Mclsaac were present in Olympia, along with Commissioner Anderson, and staff members Bill Tweit, Ryan Lothrop and Nikki Kloepfer. Workgroup member Graybill attended by webinar. Approximately 20 members of the public and other staff members attended on a conference call line.

Administrative Matters

The CR WG elected Commissioner Mclsaac as Chair, adopted Robert's Rules of Order for procedural rules, and adopted the same three criteria that were used in the Joint State Columbia River Salmon Fishery Policy Review Committee (PRC) to evaluate different alternatives and options: ability to achieve conservation goals, likelihood of orderly fisheries, and probability of maintaining or enhancing the economic well-being and stability of recreational and commercial fisheries, using the metrics of angler trips and ex-vessel prices, respectively.

The purpose of the meeting was to review staff analysis documents that had been scheduled for review at the November 18, 2019 PRC meeting, and to refine and if possible, winnow remaining alternatives for consideration at the next CR WG meeting.

Review of Remaining Analyses

Spring Chinook

The recreational/commercial allocation spring chinook abundance-based matrix as described in Table 1 of the staff paper was reviewed and staff was tasked with displaying and analyzing a matrix refined by

- eliminating the use the Willamette River run-size as a determinant;
- simplifying the medium run size allocation to 70/30; and
- changing the high run size allocation to 60/35 with 5 percentage points to be allocated to the Snake River sport allocation in addition to their current allocation.

In brief, the rationale for this change was to not peg a Washington policy matrix to the strength of an Oregon river, to simplify the medium run size category, to achieve an overall matrix allocation of somewhere near 70/30, and to increase the allocation to Snake River recreational fisheries at high run sizes. In addition to analyzing the effects on the basis of the recent 15 years of record, the staff was tasked with analyzing the results if future run sizes corresponded to those in the 2015-19 time period.

Regarding the allocation of unused commercial impacts, the Workgroup de-activated Alternative 1 from further analysis and consideration and refined Alternative 2 to allow unused

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impacts for either the upriver or lower river recreational fisheries, or spawning escapement, but with a higher priority to upriver fisheries if all other considerations are equal.

Rationale for the deactivation cited the federal and state rigorous identification of an amount of catch that achieves a conservation standard of “no jeopardy” for ESA-listed stocks, and the great value of both commercial and recreational fisheries when this “no jeopardy” level of impact is used to conduct fisheries targeting healthy stocks.

The rationale for the refinement to Alternative 2 was to provide the Columbia River Compact the maximum flexibility to provide benefits that have been established for fisheries to apply to either lower river or upriver sport fisheries, or the spawning escapement if conditions warrant.

On the issue of allocation of unused recreational fishery impacts, the Workgroup asked that the current Oregon rules be identified as Alternative 1 for consideration in the Washington process. The rationale for this was similar to that for the allocation of unused commercial fishery impacts: once a fishery impact on a group of fish in conservation status has been identified that does not impair sustainability, it is very valuable to society that this impact be taken as identified in the biological opinion or similar analysis, even if not in the original fishery envisioned. Staff was asked to provide a reaction/analysis of this using the three evaluation criteria, beyond whatever has already been analyzed in the PRC record.

Summer Chinook

Regarding the allocation unused commercial impacts, Alternative 3 was refined in to allow allocation to lower river recreational fisheries if needed, in addition to upriver non-treaty fisheries. The rationale was the same as for the allocation of unused commercial impacts in spring chinook fisheries.

Policy Language

The draft policy language document was reviewed, and several edits and clarification were identified for incorporation into the next draft for further consideration at the next Workgroup meeting.

Barbless Hook Information Summary

The information summary on the question of a voluntary or mandatory barbless hook requirement was set aside until a time when more of the Commissioners might be able to hear the information and analysis.

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Other Winnowing, Refinements or Additions

A new alternative to the allowable commercial fishing gear for spring chinook was identified as Alternative 3 to Issue 2, to allow either tangle net or gill net gear to be used before or after the run size update. The rationale for this alternative was that the flexibility to use best commercial gear should be available to the Columbia River Compact to react to the abundance and conservation situations at hand in a given year. As opposed to the other refinements, de-activation, and winnowing of alternatives at this meeting, this change to the range of alternatives was by majority vote with Commissioners Kehoe and Mclsaac voting aye and Commissioner Graybill voting no.

Fall Chinook

The Work Group identified a new alternative for analysis as Alternative 1, Issue 2 that adjusted the PRC recommendation for allowable commercial fishing gear to be gillnet, tangle net, or beach seine gear in any zone, to allow for gillnet or any alternative gear in any zone. The rationale for this change was to provide the Columbia River Compact with the flexibility to choose the best available commercial fishing gear in a given year, including other existing or yet-to-be developed alternative gear.

Future Process and Schedule

The Workgroup agreed to recommend to the full Commission, to be considered at the March 13 Commission meeting, that the schedule adopted at the February Commission meeting be modified from an April – June two meeting decision process to a June – August two meeting process. The basis of this recommendation was the concern expressed at the February Commission meeting about the early-April staff workload burdens during the confluence of North of Falcon, Pacific Council, and Commission meetings. The recommendation is as follows:

June 10 or 11	Yakima	Workgroup meeting to discuss a public review draft of Policy C-3620 changes and make a recommendation to full Commission
June 12 or 13	Yakima	Commission agenda item on a decision to release a draft with changes to Policy C-3620 for public review

July 29 or 30	Aberdeen	Workgroup meeting to discuss recommendations on final Policy C-3620 changes
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July 31 or Aug 1

Aberdeen

Commission agenda item on a final decision on any changes to Policy C-3620

Staff Assignments

1. Update the Range of Alternatives spreadsheet to reflect the decisions of the Work Group at this meeting.
2. Incorporate the refinements to the spring chinook allocation abundance-based matrix and provide analysis of effects.
3. Provide analysis of the refinement of Spring Chinook Issue 5, Alternative 2 and Issue 6, Alternative.
4. Provide analysis of the refinement of Summer Chinook Issue 2, Alternative 2.
5. Provide analysis of Spring Chinook Issue 2, Alternative 3.
6. Provide analysis of Fall Chinook Issue 2, Alternative 1.
7. Work with the Work Group Members in developing the next draft of a policy language document that reflects the discussions at this meeting.
8. In the spreadsheet displaying the Range of Alternatives that have been considered, supplement footnote one describing the current status quo to include that for 2020, to included language on the negotiated temporary agreement between the Directors of Washington and Oregon Fish and Wildlife Departments exists for 2020 only; what the details of that agreement are; and that the temporary agreement was stipulated to have no precedence for future joint-State agreements.