

## Summary

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<b>Meeting dates:</b>	February 7, 2014 Commission Meeting
<b>Agenda item:</b>	Columbia River Emerging Purse Seine and Beach Seine Fishery Policy C-3620 – (Briefing and Public Hearing)
<b>Presenter(s):</b>	Guy Norman, Region 5 Director Ron Roler, Columbia River Policy Coordinator

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### **Background summary:**

In September, 2012 the Washington Fish and Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commissions agreed to work together, with agency staff, and key stakeholders in an effort to develop alternative approaches to management of the sport and commercial fisheries on the Columbia River. A Workgroup was formed consisting of three commissioners from each state. Advisors to the Workgroup included two sport and two commercial fishing stakeholders from each state and a Clatsop County Commissioner representing the four coastal counties of Pacific, Wahkiakum, Clatsop, and Columbia. The Workgroup met three times during September-November, 2012 to discuss and analyze proposed fishery strategies. A final document, *'Management Strategies for Columbia River Recreational and Commercial Fisheries: 2013 and Beyond'*, was completed on November 21 to reflect the agreed recommendations made by consensus of the Washington and Oregon Commission Workgroup members.

In January, 2013, The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (WFWC) utilized the November 21 Workgroup recommendations as guidance to adopt Policy C-3620. The policy is applicable to management by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) of Pacific salmon (spring Chinook, summer Chinook, fall Chinook, sockeye, chum, and coho) fisheries in the mainstem of the Columbia River and the lower Snake River. The policy term is January, 2013 through December, 2023.

The policy provides for a transition in commercial gear types that over time eliminates the use of traditional gillnets in favor of selective gear types such as beach seines, purse seines, and tangle nets in part dependent on the success of the new gear types in achieving the objectives of the Policy.

To facilitate the transition and the development of selective gear types, pursuant to RCW 77.70.160, the Director may issue experimental permits for commercial harvest in an emerging fishery for which the Director has determined there is a need to limit the number of participants. The Director shall limit the number of participants to prevent habitat damage, ensure conservation of the resource, and prevent overharvesting. In developing rules for limiting participation in an emerging commercial fishery, the Director appointed a five-person advisory board from the affected fishing industry. As per the RCW, the Emerging Commercial Fisheries Advisory Board (ECFAB) reviews and makes recommendations to the Director on rules relating to the number and qualifications of the participants for the experimental fishery permits.

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**Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:**

Preferred options for rules regarding the number and qualifications for Washington experimental fishery permits to be issued by the Director for a pilot beach and purse seine commercial fishery in the in the lower Columbia River during the fall of 2014.

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

As required under Washington state law, the Department has established a five-person advisory panel of Washington commercial fishers to assist them in developing recommendations for implementing pilot beach and purse seine fisheries in 2014. This panel has convened under a public setting twice over the past few months. Oregon staff members have attended and participated in these meetings. During these meetings, a number of questions have arisen concerning who gets to participate in the fishery, how participants will be selected, how harvest quotas will be shared between the pilot fisheries and existing mainstem gill net fisheries, how gear and boats will be regulated, and when and where the fisheries will occur.

Oregon and Washington staff members agreed to coordinate Washington's Emerging Fisheries process with a more comprehensive planning effort involving the full Columbia River Commercial Fishery Advisory Group and the public. Two Advisory Group meetings were held, one in October and one in December, as was a public meeting in Astoria in December to discuss options and solicit input from Columbia River gill netters, fish buyers and interested members of the public.

There were numerous options discussed for determining participation in the 2014 Columbia River pilot seine fishery. The options included:

1. Open: All fishers with active Columbia River permit.
2. Open with qualifications: Same as open with minimum landing requirements.
3. Open with cap: Require notice of intent to fish annually using Individual Fish Quotas (IFQs).
4. Lottery: Can be weighted by landings or every permit equal.
5. Competitive Bid: Fish available for harvest would be available to highest bidders.

The majority of the fishers that attended meetings supported a method that allowed active fishers to participate in the emerging fishery if they choose to.

Following review of input received from the public processes and discussions with ODFW staff, there are two options that WDFW staff concludes should be considered for rules and qualifications in a limited entry fishery in 2014.

1. Columbia River gillnet license with minimum landing requirements: This option would provide fair opportunity for participation by fishers that have been active in the Columbia River commercial fisheries in recent years and enable all individuals with interest to begin to use the gear. IFQs would be considered if necessary once total seine fishery allocation is finalized through the North of Falcon process and the actual number of qualified Washington and Oregon seine fishery participants are accounted for in the application process. IFQs could be considered, if necessary, along with the other detailed regulations, when specific seasons are adopted in the Columbia River fall Compact.
  2. Lottery with qualified Columbia River gillnet license: This option would involve pre-determining the total number of participants in the beach and purse seine
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fisheries for 2014 to match the number of fish allocated to the seine fishery. If the number of qualified applicants exceeds the Washington portion of the permits, the Director would select participants through a lottery process. The advantage of this method is ensuring that the fishery is not over capitalized, with a limited number of the harvestable fish allocated to seine fisheries in the first year of the fishery- the progressive plan for implementation calls for the majority of the fall Chinook harvest to be allocated to the large-mesh gillnet fishery upstream of the Lewis River during the transition to ensure the overall economic viability of the fishery. However, a lottery may also exclude some of the fishers that have interest in experimenting with the seine gear and not adequately promote the fishery.

Process for 2014 implementation: The Director would adopt qualifications (license requirement, landing requirement, and boat size limit) as part of the Washington permit process. The remainder of the specific gear rules and regulations can be clarified at the North of Falcon meetings which would allow time for participants to order gear for the fishery. The Director would receive Washington seine permit applications in the spring and issue permits in the summer. The Columbia River Compact would set initial commercial fall seasons and regulations, including seine and gillnet fisheries, in the late July fall Compact hearing. The remainder of the commercial season would be set in a series of in-season Compact hearings occurring from August-October. Permit qualifications and rules would be reviewed after the 2014 seasons and adjustments can be made as necessary for the 2015 phase of the seine fisheries implementation.

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**Action requested:**

No action, information and policy discussion only

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**Draft motion language:**

NA

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**Justification for Commission action:**

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**Communications Plan:**

The Department will continue to work with ODFW, stakeholders, and the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group to develop the seine fisheries. The North of Falcon process will be utilized to allocate the ESA impacts (with guidance from Policy C-3620) and harvest between the Columbia River commercial gillnet fishery, the pilot seine fishery, and the recreational fisheries. In-season adjustments to the seine fishery will be made at the Columbia River Compact hearings.

The Department will update the Commission on implementation progress during the planning, permitting, and regulatory stages of the seine fisheries in 2014.