

Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: September 27, 2019

Agenda item: Petition to amend sport fishing rules at Erie and Heart lakes in Skagit County

Presenter(s): Edward Eleazer, Region 4 Fish Program

Background summary:

Thomas Fulk (representative of the Fidalgo Fly Fishers) has proposed that the sport fishing rules at Erie and Heart lakes in Skagit County be amended (Figure 1). This amendment would extend the fishing season from Opening Day (4th Saturday in April to October 31) to year-round.

Erie and Heart lakes have been managed as Opening Day lakes for over 25 years with annual stocking allotments of catchable-size Rainbow Trout of 8,000 and 13,000 fish, respectively. Both lakes are highly popular destinations on Opening Day attracting anglers locally and from around the Puget Sound.

As indicated on the attached map there are several publicly accessible lakes within 10 miles that are open to fishing year-round including Campbell, Cranberry at Deception Pass State Park, Pass, and Whistle.

Staff recommendation:

Deny the petition to amend sport fishing rules to change the fishing season at Erie and Heart lakes in Skagit County to year-round. Opening Day is an annual event that marks the start to the fishing season where anglers of all ages, experience, and specialty can enjoy success fishing and is the traditional introduction to fishing for most anglers in Washington.

In 2018 the Department completed a yearlong public process to simplify sport fishing rules for game fish including reducing the number of different seasons on lowland lakes. When staff reviewed, existing rules there were dozens of different seasons contributing to angler confusion and frustration. Staff did not recommend changing the opening day on Erie and Heart lakes in Skagit County. Removing these waters as Opening Day fisheries will eliminate this type of opportunity locally and reduce the number of Opening Day lakes in western Skagit County from four to two.

Erie and Heart lakes are among the most popular Opening Day fisheries in the Puget Sound and are key components to managing diverse recreational opportunity in western Skagit County.

Given the number of year-round lakes in Skagit county, denying this petition will still provide quality year-round fishing opportunities.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

Pursuant to RCW 34.05.330

Option A) Deny the petition in writing, stating the reasons for the denial, specifically addressing the concerns raised by the petitioners; or

Option B) Initiate rule making for the proposal to change the sportfishing season at Erie and Heart Lakes from the 4th Saturday in April to October 31, to year-round.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

No fiscal impact to the agency.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

None

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Department staff recommend the Commission deny this petition to change the sportfishing season at Erie and Heart Lakes from the 4th Saturday in April to October 31, to year-round.

Draft motion language:

Option A (preferred) Motion: I move to deny the petitions to change the sportfishing season at Erie and Heart Lakes.

Is there a "second"?

If so, then motion maker states the basis for the motion; other Commissioners discuss views on motion; amendments, if any, proposed and addressed.

Option B Motion: I move to accept the petition and direct the Department to initiate rule-making concurrent with the upcoming North of Falcon rule making and delegate the decision to the Director for implementation July 1, 2020.

Is there a "second"?

If so, then motion maker states the basis for the motion; other Commissioners discuss views on motion; amendments, if any, proposed and addressed.

Post decision communications plan:

Commission staff will provide a letter to the petitioners with the final outcome of the Commission decision regarding the petition.

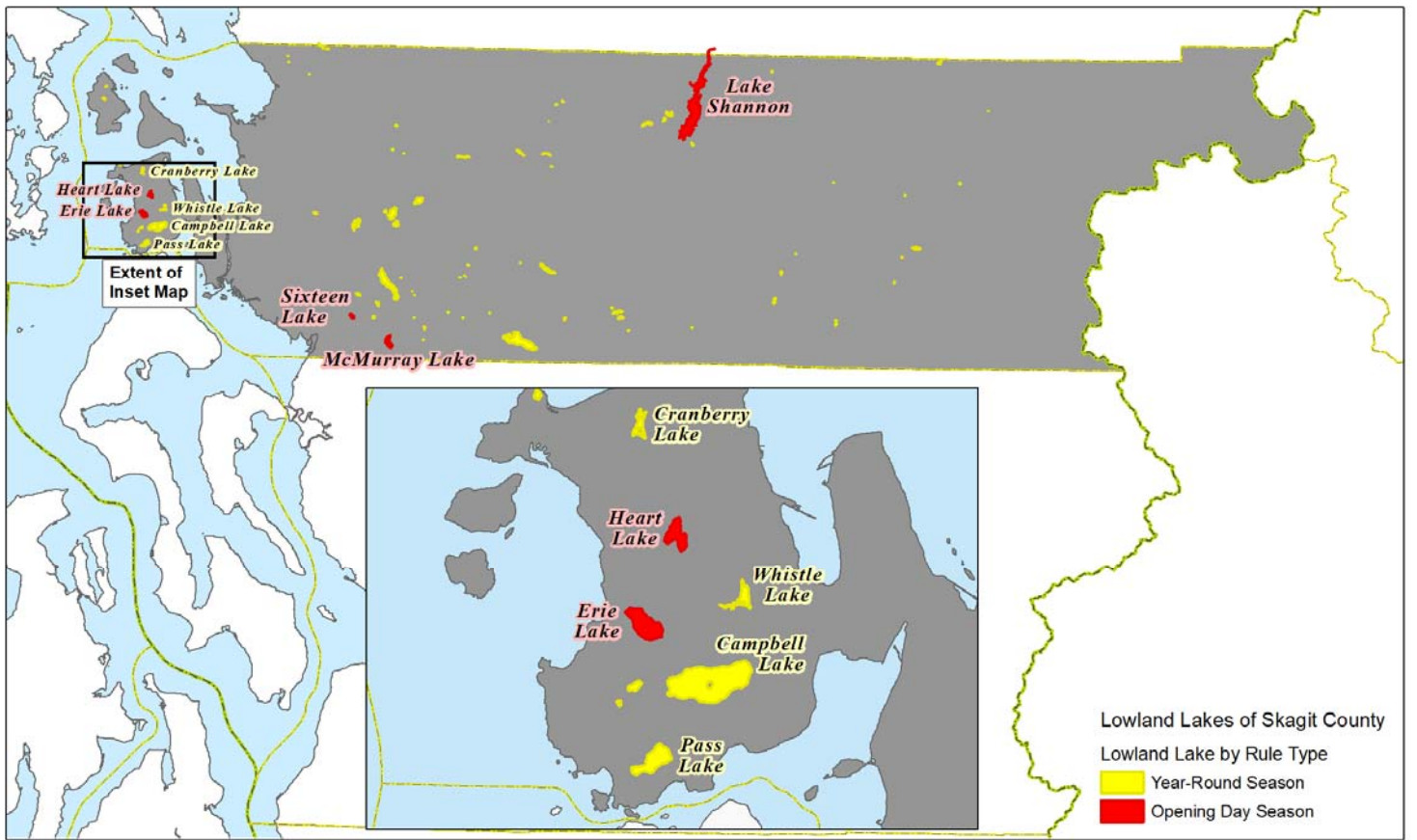


Figure 1. Skagit County lowland lakes with year-round seasons in yellow and opening day seasons in red.