

# Advancing Columbia River Policy Objectives

## Request from Governor Inslee – June 8<sup>th</sup>

In June 2021, Governor Inslee requested the Department prepare a supplemental budget proposal for the 2022 legislative session to “ensure the recovery of salmon and sustain responsible fisheries”. Specifically, the Governor requested the budget proposal include recommendations for a voluntary license reduction program, a path forward for “improving our understanding and implementation of viable alternative gears” and identify any science and monitoring needs. The Governor also requested that the agency to work with Oregon on the above initiatives as well as broader Columbia River management objectives and develop recommendations in consultation with tribal comanagers.

## Recommended Path Forward

### **2022 Supplemental Budget Request (\$3.4M)**

In response to the Governor’s request, the Department is developing a decision package for the 2022 supplemental session. The decision package will include the following elements:

- *License reduction* – funding for a voluntary license reduction program (\$2,170,000)
- *Alternative gears* – funding to support further research on alternative gears, and develop tools for navigating new permitting and leasing processes (\$226,000)
- *Communication, outreach, and policy support*– funding to develop focused education and outreach tools on Columbia River fisheries and to support regional policy dialogue (\$388,000)
- *Increased monitoring* – funding to improve monitoring for Columbia River fisheries to refine mortality estimates and track progress over time (\$620,000)

### **Consultation with Co-managers and Key Partners**

The Governor requested that the Department consult with several key partners, both in the development of this supplemental budget request and throughout the process of conducting the funded activities. He asked that the agency work with Oregon regarding salmon recovery, concurrency, alternative gear, and license reduction and consult with tribal co-managers during this process. The Department also plans to work with license holders in development and implementation of this work as well as other interested stakeholders and members of the public.

## 2022 Supplemental Budget Request Summary

### **License Reduction**

The WDFW team has been exploring a range of program structures to identify options that achieve the Governor’s objectives while upholding the values we’ve heard from license holders. The following key principles served as useful reference points for developing a program that achieves both goals:

- The program must be voluntary
- The program needs to be appealing to active and inactive license holders
- The program needs to offer a fair price for licenses (e.g., above market value)
- The program should accommodate broad participation while minimizing loopholes

- The request should identify impacts to the harvest of hatchery fish, the conservation of wild salmon bycatch, and the effects on the commercial industry and impacted communities

The Department is recommending a two-choice program structure. Under this structure, license holders would have the option of participating in either a) a fixed bid program for \$10,000 per licenses, or b) a reverse auction program. This provides license holders with a choice based on their particular situation and fishing history and is appealing to both active and inactive license holders. The Department is currently working on additional analysis to determine the specific program details (e.g., thresholds, dollar amounts) and will continue to engage the fleet through the legislative and rulemaking processes.

### ***Alternative Gear***

This past spring, Director Susewind initiated a rulemaking process to designate an Emerging Commercial Fishery in the Lower Columbia River for a variety of alternative gears. To support these exploratory fisheries, the Department is requesting funding to:

- Diversify the research efforts currently underway by experimenting with more gears
- Conduct a review of the information available to date on alternative gears
- Design and conduct a study to investigate mortality rates and handle estimates for modified seine gears using the passive handle technique pioneered by the Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC) for the pound net or other untested gear
- Develop a streamlined approach for fishers to apply for licenses, permits and leases

### ***Communication, Outreach and Policy Support***

While the number of licenses in the fishery and the type of gear used are important considerations to sustainable fisheries management, these specific programs do not address the Governor's goal of ensuring the conservation and recovery of wild salmon. This budget request will support several communication activities that will help stakeholders, managers, policy makers and the public advance important discussions around wild salmon conservation including:

- Development of a suite of communication materials on Columbia River fisheries and wild salmon conservation and recovery to cover the science, address questions and common misperceptions
- Creation of content tailored toward seafood consumers (e.g. info on sustainable salmon management, the Columbia River fishery, seasons, catch, community impacts and certifications)
- Funding to support ongoing regional dialogues around Columbia River programs and policies (e.g. contractor to support process and/or development of materials)

### ***Increased monitoring***

Governor Inslee also requested that the agency outline monitoring necessary to track progress on Columbia River salmon recovery and conservation efforts over time. With that in mind, this budget proposal includes the following monitoring components:

- Funding for the one-time purchase of a passive integrated transponder array (PIT tag detector), PIT tags and supplies
- Staff to assist with development and implementation of a more rigorous monitoring plan (e.g. increased observation, logbooks, electronic monitoring and/or enhanced creel)