



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

Meeting date: February 25th, 2022; 8:00-10:00 AM

Agenda item: Chelan River Sport Fishing Rule Change Petition

Presenter(s): Chad Jackson, Region 2 Fish Program Manager

Background summary:

- The WDFW received a Petition for Adoption, Amendment, or Repeal of a State Administrative Rule and companion letter from a Mr. Scott Bean on January 11th, 2022. Mr. Bean is petitioning the Commission to open the Chelan River to fishing:
 - From a “safe distance below the Chelan PUD safety barrier to the powerhouse at Chelan Lake”.
 - Under “catch-and-release only” rules for all species.
 - Prohibit “any bait fishing”.
 - Require “barbless hooks”.
- The Chelan River is Washington’s shortest river at 4.1-miles flowing from Lake Chelan and into the Columbia River between Rocky Reach and Wells dams (Figure 1).
- From a fishing rules perspective there are two reaches of interest on the Chelan River (Figure 2):
 - A lower reach that flows from the railroad bridge near the confluence with the Columbia River (i.e., mouth) upstream to the Chelan PUD powerhouse (0.5-mile). This reach is accessible by anadromous salmon and steelhead (primarily summer Chinook). Fishing is open under permanent WAC from the railroad bridge upstream to the safety barrier just below the Chelan PUD powerhouse. Fishing is closed under permanent WAC from the safety barrier upstream to the Chelan PUD powerhouse for safety and security purposes.
 - An upper reach from the Chelan PUD powerhouse up to the Lake Chelan Dam (3.6-miles). This reach is inaccessible by anadromous salmon and steelhead due to a 0.4-mile steep gorge area with several waterfalls (5-20 feet). This reach is closed to fishing under permanent WAC.
- Prior to 2015, the upper Chelan River was opened to fishing under Statewide General Rules (i.e., June-October, daily limit 2 trout, minimum size 8”, and bait allowed).
- In 2015, fishing was closed in the upper Chelan River to facilitate a multi-year (2015-2018) evaluation of resident game fish restoration efforts in this reach. The evaluation was a mitigation obligation of Chelan PUD for their Lake Chelan hydroelectric project.

- Closing fishing was deemed necessary to eliminate the effect of angler harvest and/or catch-and-release mortality on resident game fish.
- Results of the evaluation showed the most observed game fish species, from highest to lowest, were smallmouth bass, Westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and northern pikeminnow.
- With the evaluation completed, the upper Chelan River can and should be re-opened to fishing.

Staff recommendation(s):

- Recommend the Commission accept the petition and initiate rulemaking separate from, but concurrent with the 2022 North of Falcon rules making process to open the upper Chelan River to fishing.
- Provide a recommended fishing rule for the upper Chelan River to the Commission following a public involvement process.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome(s):

- Accept the petition.
- Initiate rulemaking.

Fiscal impact(s) of agency implementation: None

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

- There was no public involvement process prior to the submission of this petition.
- A public involvement process will occur if rulemaking is initiated.

Action(s) requested and/or proposed next step(s): Accept the petition and initiate rulemaking separate from, but concurrent with the 2022 North of Falcon rules making process. A rule change for the upper Chelan River would take effect July 1st, 2022 (i.e., start of new Sport Fishing Rules Pamphlet cycle).

Draft motion language:

- I move to accept the petition and initiate rulemaking for the upper Chelan River separate from, but concurrent with the 2022 North of Falcon rules making process.
- Is there a “second”?
- If yes, then:
 - The motion maker discusses the basis for accepting the petition.
 - Other Commissioners may discuss their views on the motion.
 - Amendments, if any, to the original motion may be made.
 - A final motion (original or modified) is identified.
 - Commission votes to approve or deny the motion.

Post decision communications plan: Communicate the outcome of the Commission’s decision to the petitioner.

Figure 1.



Figure 2.

