

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group
Meeting #6 Summary
Monday, September 12, 2022
Time: 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Attendees

Advisory Group Members

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| Robert “Bob” Kratzer | WA State Guides Association |
| Chris Ringlee | Private angler |
| Geoff McMichael | Mainstem Fish Research, LLC |
| Jason Rolfe | The Flyfish Journal |
| Jessica Helsley | Wild Salmon Center |
| Jonathan Stumpf | Trout Unlimited |
| Luke Probasco | Private angler |
| Mara Zimmerman | Coast Salmon Partnership |
| Roy Morris | Retired guide/private angler |

Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Staff

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|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Amy Edwards | WDFW – Fisheries Biologist |
| Anja Huff | WDFW – Fisheries Biologist |
| Eryn Couch | WDFW – Communications Manager |
| James Losee | WDFW – Region 6 Project Manager |
| Toby Harbison | WDFW – Fisheries Biologist |

Facilitation Team

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| Greer Maier | Triangle Associates, Facilitator |
| Olivia Smith | Triangle Associates, Facilitation Support |

Meeting Materials

- [September 12 Meeting Recording](#)
- [September 12 Meeting Slides](#)
- [September 12 Meeting Agenda](#)

| <i>September 12, 2022, Action Items</i> | <i>Due Date</i> |
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| <i>Advisor Action Items</i> | |
| Review and provide edits in track changes or comment bubbles to the entire CSPIP draft. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send comments to Toby Harbison and Triangle with initials in the file name. Triangle will post all comments to the SharePoint site. | 2 weeks prior to November Meeting (Date TBD). *If you have immediate feedback, do not wait until the due date to share it.* |
| <i>Homework:</i> Think about the following questions and come to the next meeting prepared to discuss: | November Meeting (Date TBD) |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What research is critical to improving coastal steelhead fisheries management?</i> • <i>What are the most important next steps in advancing management of coastal steelhead?</i> • <i>How might those steps fit in to Regional Management Plans?</i> | |
| <i>WDFW Action Items</i> | |
| WDFW to share updated CSPIP. | Sept. 23 Oct. 10 |
| WDFW to share relevant existing mitigation agreements that pertain to hatchery production with Advisory Group. | Sept. 26 |
| WDFW to explore how to capture and communicate alternative ideas that were not incorporated into the CSPIP but were brought forward by Advisors. | Ongoing |
| Incorporate Advisory Group feedback and produce a revised/track-changed draft and update the response to comment matrix for Advisory Group members to review ahead of the next meeting. | 1 week before Nov. meeting date (TBD) |
| <i>Triangle Action Items</i> | |
| Schedule November hybrid meeting. | TBD (Based on Doodle Poll) |
| Draft Sept. 12 meeting summary. | Sept. 27 |

Future Agenda Topics:

- Socioeconomic impacts
- Understanding early run steelhead and impacts from hatcheries/harvest
- Number of wild steelhead that spawn before March 15 and consequences for redd survey timing

Welcome and Introductions

The facilitator, Greer Maier with Triangle Associates (Triangle), welcomed Advisors and gave an overview of the meeting agenda. Olivia Smith, Triangle, reviewed previous action items and led a round of introductions.

Test Fishery Update

Toby Harbison, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), explained how past conversations on test fisheries with the Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group (CSAG) have helped to inform current internal conversations, and the concept of a test fishery will be a small portion of the Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan (CSPIP). Contact Toby Harbison directly with any questions.

Tribal Co-Manager Communications

WDFW shared they are working with Tribal Co-Managers to develop the CSPIP, noting that the

CSPIP is focused on state-managed fisheries. WDFW will be increasing engagement with Tribal Co-Managers as they begin to develop Regional Management Plans (RMPs) to understand the full suite of goals.

Public Input

There were not any public comments submitted to the WDFW CSAG portal since the last meeting in August, but a few letters were sent to WDFW and the CSAG.

WDFW Coordination & Collaboration

Toby gave an overview of a map that describes the various WDFW regions across Washington State to explain the spectrum of people involved in the CSPIP including but not limited to NOAA, Tribal Co-Managers, Olympic National Park, and others ([Slides 3-5](#)).

- In response to a question from Jonathan Stumpf about if the CSAG will have the opportunity to review comments from the WDFW Science Division, Toby explained the WDFW Science Division has been working on the CSPIP throughout the process and there is not a formal review step or way to easily share comments. It was noted the CSPIP will undergo a formal policy review internally and that the WDFW Director will need to sign off on before going to legislature.

Hatchery Wrap-Up

Toby Harbison shared topics that were carried over from the August 11 CSAG meeting including hatchery scaling ([Slides 7-16](#)). WDFW's goal is to have figures in the RMPs explaining the different scaled releases focused on hatchery operation goals for every major river system. Then, Toby reviewed additional considerations for hatchery management.

Questions and Discussion:

- Jason Rolfe asked to confirm if the current hatchery releases in the Skookumchuck and Newaukum Rivers is above the recommendations from the scaling analysis and asked if hatchery releases will be scaled back in these rivers. Toby Harbison explained the idea is to turn the dials (scaling, trapping efficiency, etc.) to meet the genetic impact genetic thresholds from the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan. This may be challenging in places with mitigation agreements, but it depends on the river. Anja Huff, WDFW, clarified the graph was run with the average survivals at the current 6-year average. James Losee, WDFW, added there will be several graphs to explain scenarios for different hatcheries in the CSPIP with the intent to meet the statewide guidelines.
- Bob Kratzer and Toby Harbison discussed reviewing the six-year average every three years, noting it will be detailed in river-specific plans. They also discussed models to evaluate differences in temporal overlap of integrated and segregated hatcheries. The group discussed spawn timing of hatchery and wild fish and potential gene flows and risks.
- Jonathan Stumpf requested copies of the mitigation agreements associated with hatcheries to better understand how they are tied to hatchery scaling. WDFW acknowledged that conversations will be complicated by mitigation agreements in place. The request for information was noted as an action item.

- Mara Zimmerman asked if there is the potential for an “off ramp” decision for hatchery programs (meaning the program could be discontinued)? WDFW suggested that in some cases this could be added as a potential future goal in the RMPs.
- Jason Rolfe commented on balancing the goals of hatcheries, harvest, and wild fish to improve temporal distribution and diversity of wild fish. WDFW supported considering spatial and temporal overlap in hatchery management and the effects on wild steelhead early run timing.
- Mara Zimmerman suggested including volitional releases to decrease residualization of hatchery fish and associated negative impacts on wild steelhead (e.g. predation and competition).
- Geoff McMichael commented on how the scaling and approach outlined in the white paper and SSMP for determining appropriate numbers of hatchery fish on spawning grounds is exclusively driven by gene flow. Geoff explained how there are techniques available to minimize interactions beyond genetic risks, that vary between hatchery program and basin, and suggested WDFW identify a threshold that can be applied broadly.
- Bob Kratzer and WDFW discussed the pros and cons of generating early hatchery runs and impacts to Tribal Co-Managers and wild steelhead return timing.

WDFW gave an overview of Wild Gene Banks (WGB), also known as Wild Steelhead Management Zones (WSMZ). They explained how the SSMP calls for one WSMZ per major population group (MPG) in each distinct population segment (DPS) with at least one major population group per Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA). The SSMP prescribes a larger stakeholder and Tribal Co-Manager process to identify WSMZ. WDFW then shared the WSMZ criteria ([slides 10-15](#)). Advisors were then invited to provide input in places where there are multiple potential WSMZ's in the draft CSPIP and share comments and preferences to help prioritize potential future WSMZs.

- Bob Kratzer asked what designating a WSMZ entails for future management. WDFW explained that these areas do not allow hatchery releases. The group briefly discussed the effects of stopping hatchery releases in the Sol Duc on wild fish populations. The group acknowledged the watershed-specific considerations that play into this conversation.
- Jonathan Stumpf asked why there cannot be more than one WSMZ per WRIA. WDFW explained that they are not advocating for more than one per WRIA. In large areas like the Chehalis Basin, clarification will be needed on whether the WSMZ is the entire stream or just a portion.
- Roy Morris asked how WDFW distinguishes “wild steelhead spawners” vs. “natural origin spawners” in redd surveys? WDFW acknowledged the challenge of identifying if a redd was made by a wild steelhead or a hatchery released fish that is spawning in the wild. They explained they use the March 15th cutoff date and redd location to help focus redd surveys on wild fish spawners. Bob Kratzer asked why redds are not being counted prior to the March 15th cutoff date, especially in areas like the Sol Duc that do not have a hatchery? WDFW explained this date has been used for 30-40 years and they would like to

keep a consistent approach to collecting data so they can compare the data across years. This is how they will operate until additional resources are available.

Action item: WDFW to share relevant existing mitigation agreements that pertain to hatchery production with Advisors.

Future agenda topic: Number of wild steelhead that spawn before March 15th and consequences for redd survey date

Future Agenda Topic: Understanding early run steelhead and impacts from hatcheries/harvest.

Habitat

Toby Harbison gave a presentation on how habitat fits into the CSPIP strategy, how the Statewide Salmon Recovery Strategy outlines habitat projects to be completed under the direction of Lead Entities, what WDFW's role is in supporting the overall strategy in Region 6, and areas WDFW could improve ([slides 18-26](#)).

Questions and Discussion:

- Mara Zimmerman noted WDFW's Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) process is a protection mechanism and recommended it be enhanced to prevent further habitat degradation.
- Chris Ringlee asked about WDFW's role in the Chehalis dam proposal. WDFW explained they have been working on an assessment analysis pertaining to the dam but it is potentially outside of the CSPIP's scope. Mara noted that WDFW has collected important data to identify key habitat areas.
- Bob Kratzer commented in favor of regular and frequent surveying of the rivers to catch activity that typically goes unseen (e.g. private landowners cutting down trees).
- Chris Ringlee asked about the Willapa Bay escapement goals and how WDFW is implementing research in this area. WDFW responded Willapa Bay is a unique due to its size and minimal data on specific subjects. WDFW is working internally with the Science Division on time series models within Willapa Bay to estimate escapement. Willapa Bay's escapement goals will likely be created differently than others.
- WDFW staff briefly discussed how habitat assessments relate to escapement and how they are working toward a comprehensive plan. Escapement goals will be updated based on new modeling and analysis.

Human Dimensions/Socioeconomics

Toby Harbison emphasized that WDFW recognizes the significance of steelhead fisheries to local communities and economies. WDFW is exploring how to best characterize and quantify human dimensions including collecting surveys, extending creel questions, guide logbooks, and catch record cards. WDFW is interested in understanding shifts in effort, angler preferences, fishery demographics, local economic impacts of changes in fishery regulations, non-consumptive resource valuation, indirect effects of healthy steelhead populations, and other human dimensions questions

[\(slides 31-32\)](#)).

Advisors were asked to contemplate and discuss the following questions:

- *What are the social and economic impacts of changes to steelhead fisheries?*
- *How should WDFW account for these impacts in fisheries management?*

Questions and Discussion:

- Roy Morris explained how important research is and how creating new experiences for the public, researchers, guides, and citizen scientists will be crucial for data collection and research. Roy noted how future research will require more public and commercial engagement.
- Bob Kratzer shared how angler behavior has changed over the last five years and the demographics of anglers may shift in response to a transition from harvesting to catch and release. Bob asked how to connect with those who have quit fishing due to decreased opportunity.
- Luke Probasco commented in favor of putting wild steelhead first over recreational opportunities and suggested implementing regulations like shorter fishing seasons or gear restrictions.
- Jessica Helsley encouraged WDFW to conduct the social science research intentionally and seriously as it requires ample time and resources to do well.
- Jason Rolfe commented on the importance of non-consumptive resources valuation and the importance of considering those who may need a boat to fish.
- Roy Morris spoke to how restrictions have contributed to angler withdrawal because of the mortality from catch and release fishing. Roy added angler interest is more widely on keeping steelhead alive.
- Geoff McMichael asked how WDFW is planning to include the management of people in the CSPIP and expressed not wanting to dilute the importance of managing human impacts. WDFW explained how the CSPIP will set the intention of this work but will require additional collaboration with other entities and scientists to develop concrete management guidelines.
- Jonathan Stumpf agreed with others on the need for WDFW to be intentional and deliberate with the social science aspect of steelhead management. Jonathan shared he will be providing more feedback to the restriction and regulation sections in the CSPIP as they focus on specific actions instead of being more high level from a conservation/non-conservation point of view.
- Bob Kratzer commented on the importance of considering social science in the CSPIP when interacting with legislature and local communities who rely on steelhead. Bob agreed WDFW needs to do this work correctly if they are going to do it and suggested bringing back the collection boxes to collect information.

The facilitator reminded the group to continue to provide feedback to WDFW on how they can build out the human dimensions section of the CSPIP.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The facilitator thanked the Advisory Group for their engagement and thoughtful questions. She shared the next meeting will be in-person/hybrid in November 2022 with a date and location to be determined.

WDFW will send an updated version of the CSPIP to include feedback from this meeting by September 23rd and the homework is for Advisors to review the full CSPIP ahead of the November meeting.

The November meeting will focus on Critical Research and Future Regional Management Plans (RMPs).

It was confirmed the Advisors do not need to sign off on the final CSPIP, but rather provide input during its development. The intention is for Advisor feedback to be incorporated into the final product.

Action item: WDFW to share updated CSPIP.

Action item: WDFW to explore how to capture and communicate alternative ideas that were not incorporated into the CSPIP but were brought forward by Advisors.

Public Comments:

- There were no public comments.

The meeting officially adjourned at 8:00 p.m. PST.