

2019 Willapa Bay Salmon Advisory Group Policy Review Meeting

January 23, 2019

6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Region 6 office Montesano, WA

Staff: Chad Herring, Barbara McClellan, Damon Peterson, Lyle Jennings

Advisors: Marlisa Dugan, Norm Reinhardt, Ross Barkhurst, Tim Hamilton, Greg McMillan, Lance Gray

Public: 4 Individuals

Chad: Opening statements, intros

Where are we?

- We will not be done with the comprehensive review by Feb. due to 2019 NOF, the detailed data requests from Fish Committee and lack of data for all years involved.
- Going to stop with this policy review process to go through NOF first then return to this review in May or June.
- In Feb, the agency will seek interim guidance from the FWC (Fish & Wildlife Commission) for 2019 fishery planning only.
- Feb Commission meeting tentative schedule has Grays Harbor 2018 review on Feb 9, 2019 at 9 am and Willapa at 10 am.

Fish Committee asked for:

1. Full description of where are we currently?

2. A better understanding and a full analysis of the 14% and assumptions from AHA

- Hatchery Reform policy is currently under review. The progress presentation will be on Friday, Feb. 8, 2019. The final presentation is due in September with the FWC taking action in either October or November. We will not know what the outcome will be until then for Hatchery Reform to help guide Willapa Bay.
- There is an Enhanced Fishery bills in the legislature to produce more fish statewide.
- Willapa has been identified where there is capacity to raise more fish for Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW). WA coastal Chinook stocks rank high for prey availability for SRKW.
- Need to have a discussion regarding Spring Chinook in Willapa Bay. Currently about 670,000 were transferred to Forks Creek Hatchery from Kalama. They were in poor condition. Release will be around May 2019 (brood year is 2018). Most will return as 4 year olds (so return in spring 2022).
 - Species-specific guidance of Spring Chinook in Willapa probably needs to be added to the interim guidance for 2019 or WB Salmon Mgmt policy.
 - We will not be collecting broodstock in Willapa Bay.
- Larry Carpenter is now Chair of the FWC and Barbara Baker is Vice Chair
- 2019 will be the first year for returns of the lowered release of Chinook from Forks Creek Hatchery.
 - About 75% of the landed catch by the marine recreational fishery using coded wire tags is from Forks Creek Hatchery.

Advisor comments:

- Need to look at the bigger picture relative to habitat and bay carrying capacity or productivity. These issues need to be included in any presentation. Will more fish help or hurt the bay?
- Need another eel grass survey within WB to see if it's in decline or not

- We are spending time arguing over the last fish. Why can't we just turn this fishery into a terminal fishery for harvest and maximize the hatchery production?
- For Willapa Bay, we have a huge problem getting hatchery fish off the spawning beds with our current production. We do not have the techniques or the infrastructure to remove them.
- We need to make some hard decisions that we don't want to make.
- This policy was set up to fail for the sport and commercial fisheries. The next four years will be difficult not just this coming year.
- The policy will never work on the budget the Dept. currently has, the equipment or infrastructure currently in place.
- Production success is based on production and the ability to collect them when they return.
- Water quality issues – dredging and aerators for Nemah

Public Testimony:

Ron Schweitzer:

- Don't understand who will get all of these additional Chinook?

LeeRoy Wisner:

- Need to get rid of HSRG. There no wild fish. Raise hatchery fish.
- The Dept needs to tell the Commission we need to do something else.

Art Holman:

- There are no fish. The cause is the ocean fishery.

Paul Qualey

- Would support moving the hatchery fish back to Forks Creek Hatchery
- Seems like we are working hard to preserve a fish that is small in the big picture.