

**5. 2013 North of Falcon Policy C-3608 – (Briefing and Public Hearing)**

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## “GREEN SHEET”

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**Meeting:** January 11-12, 2013, Commission Meeting

**Agenda item #5:** 2013 North of Falcon Policy C-32608 – (Briefing and Public Hearing)

**Staff Contact:** John Long, Fish Program  
Pat Pattillo, Directors Office

**Presenter(s):** John Long, Fish Program  
Pat Pattillo, Directors Office

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**Background:**

The Commission’s North of Falcon Policy provides direction and guidance to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) as it conducts the annual process for defining salmon fishing seasons in Pacific Ocean, Columbia River, Puget Sound, and Washington Coastal marine and freshwater areas.

Guidance from the Commission to the Department provided in the North of Falcon Policy clarifies the priority to meet conservation objectives.

Guidance also is provided as to prioritization or allocation of fishing opportunity that will achieve a fair balance between sectors, including recreational and commercial fisheries. Given the variation in species abundance and availability in Washington fisheries, policy direction is provided by species and by major regions including Puget Sound, the Columbia River, Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, and the Pacific Ocean.

Department staff will provide a briefing of the Commission’s North of Falcon Policy (C-3608 currently in effect through December 31, 2012) and propose modifications for the Commission’s consideration of a January, 2013 through December, 2014 policy.

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**Policy issues:**

Policy guidance to the Department for defining annual salmon fishing seasons in Washington State that meets conservation objectives and provide fair allocation of non-treaty commercial and recreational fishing opportunity.

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**Public involvement process and outcome:**

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**Action requested:**

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**Draft motion language:**

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**Justification for Commission Action:**

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**Communications Plan:**

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**POLICY TITLE: 2011-2012 North of Falcon**

**POLICY NUMBER: POL-C3608**

Supersedes: C-3608, 2009-2010

Effective Date: February 4, 2011

Termination Date: December 31, 2012

See Also: [POL C-3001](#)

Approved by: /s/ Miranda Wecker  
Fish and Wildlife  
Commission Chair

## **North of Falcon Policy**

This Policy will guide Department staff in considering conservation, allocation, in-season management, and monitoring issues associated with the annual, salmon fishery planning process known as “North of Falcon”. When considering management issues, Department staff will ensure that decisions are made consistent with the Department’s statutory authority, U.S. v. Washington, U.S. v. Oregon, the Endangered Species Act, the Puget Sound Chinook Harvest Management Plan, the Pacific Salmon Treaty, the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s Framework Salmon Management Plan, pertinent state/tribal agreements, and the applicable Fish and Wildlife Commission policies.

The Department will implement this Policy consistent with the purposes and intended outcomes described in the 21st Century Salmon and Steelhead Planning Project including:

- WDFW shall manage salmon and steelhead to recovery and sustainability in a way that is science-based, well-documented, transparent, well-communicated, and accountable.
- Fisheries are managed to meet or exceed ESA, recovery, and conservation goals; and harvest management measures protect and promote the long-term well-being of the commercial and recreational fisheries.

## **Fishery Management**

### General

- On a statewide basis, fishing opportunities will be provided when they can be directed at healthy wild and hatchery stocks.
- Selective fishing methods and gears that maximize fishing opportunity and minimize impacts on depressed stocks will be utilized to the fullest extent possible within legal constraints of implementation and budgetary limits associated with required sampling, monitoring and enforcement programs.
- When assessed from a statewide perspective, fishing directed at chinook, coho, pink, sockeye, or chum salmon will not be exclusively reserved for either sport or commercial users.
- When managing sport fisheries, meaningful recreational fishing opportunities will be distributed equitably across fishing areas and reflect the diverse interests of fishers, including retention and catch and release fisheries.

- The Department will seek non-treaty fishing access to unutilized portions of treaty harvest allocations through the implementation of pre-season agreements, taking into consideration changes in abundance, fishery conflicts, and factors that may influence attainment of spawning escapement objectives.

### Sockeye, Chum, and Pink Salmon

- For fisheries directed at Fraser River origin chum, pink, and sockeye stocks, the majority of harvest will be provided to the commercial fisheries.
- For fisheries directed at harvestable Puget Sound origin chum stocks, the majority of harvest will be provided to the commercial fisheries.
- For fisheries directed at Lake Washington sockeye, the first 200,000 non-treaty harvest will be provided to recreational fishers. If the allowable non-treaty harvest is greater than 200,000, commercial harvest directed at this stock may be considered.
- For fisheries directed at harvestable Puget Sound origin pink salmon, seasons will be established that provide meaningful opportunities for both recreational and commercial fisheries while minimizing gear and other fishery conflicts.

### Chinook and Coho Salmon

- The Puget Sound harvest management objectives for chinook and coho stocks, in priority order, are to (1) provide meaningful recreational fishing opportunities, and (2) identify and provide opportunities for commercial harvest. When managing sport fisheries in this region, recreational opportunities will be distributed equitably across fishing areas, considering factors such as the: uniqueness of each area, the availability of opportunities for various species in each area throughout the season, desire to provide high levels of total recreational opportunity, and biological impacts.
- Grays Harbor harvest management objectives shall include opportunities for both the recreational and commercial fisheries.
- Columbia River harvest management regimes shall be developed in cooperation with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife representatives. Commercial and recreational fishing opportunity will be scheduled to optimize the non-treaty harvest of chinook and coho and to provide a balanced opportunity to each fleet. When developing recreational and commercial fishing options, the Department shall consider fair and reasonable catch opportunity, stability and duration of fisheries, as well as sharing of the conservation responsibility.
- Willapa Bay harvest management shall be consistent with Willapa Bay Framework management objectives. The following general intent shall apply: Willapa Bay harvest management objectives shall include meaningful opportunities for both recreational and commercial fisheries.
- Pacific Ocean harvest shall be managed consistent with the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Framework Salmon Management Plan and the National Standards that provide for fair and equitable allocation of fishing privileges among various fishers.

### **In-Season Management**

- When in-season management actions are taken, they will be implemented in a manner that is consistent with pre-season conservation and harvest management objectives, and the fishery intent developed through the North of Falcon process.

## **Monitoring, Sampling and Enforcement**

- Monitoring, sampling and enforcement programs will be provided to account for species and population impacts of all fisheries and to ensure compliance with state regulations.
- Fishery participants will be required to comply with fishery monitoring and evaluation programs designed to account for species and population impacts.

## **Gear and Fishery Conflicts**

- Recreational and commercial fisheries shall be structured to minimize gear and other fishery conflicts. Unanticipated fishery interaction issues identified in-season, including conflicts with fisheries directed at other species, shall be resolved by involving the appropriate sport and commercial representatives in a dispute resolution process managed by Department staff.

## **Incidental Mortalities**

- The Department will manage fisheries to minimize mortalities on non-target species (e.g. rockfish, sea birds, etc.). Management regimes will include strategies to limit seabird mortalities consistent with the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

## **Communications**

- The Department shall strive to make ongoing improvements for effective public involvement during the North of Falcon planning process and annual salmon fishery implementation, incorporating the following intents:
  - include North of Falcon participants as observers during appropriate state/tribal discussions of fishery issues.
  - maintain a record of all decisions made during the North of Falcon process.
  - use a variety of tools to effectively communicate with the public, receiving input on pre-season planning or in-season fishery issues, and making available the record of decisions; such tools will include use of recreational and commercial advisory groups, public workshops addressing key issues, the WDFW North of Falcon Web site, and in-season tele-conferencing.

## **Other Species**

- The Fish and Wildlife Commission's policy on Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management (POL-C3001) shall guide pre-season and in-season planning of Columbia River and coastal sturgeon fisheries and related incidental impacts. Management of Willapa Bay sturgeon fisheries will be further guided by Willapa Bay Framework management objectives.

## **Delegation of Authority**

The Fish and Wildlife Commission delegates the authority to the Director to make harvest agreements with Northwest treaty tribes and other governmental agencies, and adopt permanent and emergency regulations resulting from the agreements made during the annual North of Falcon process.