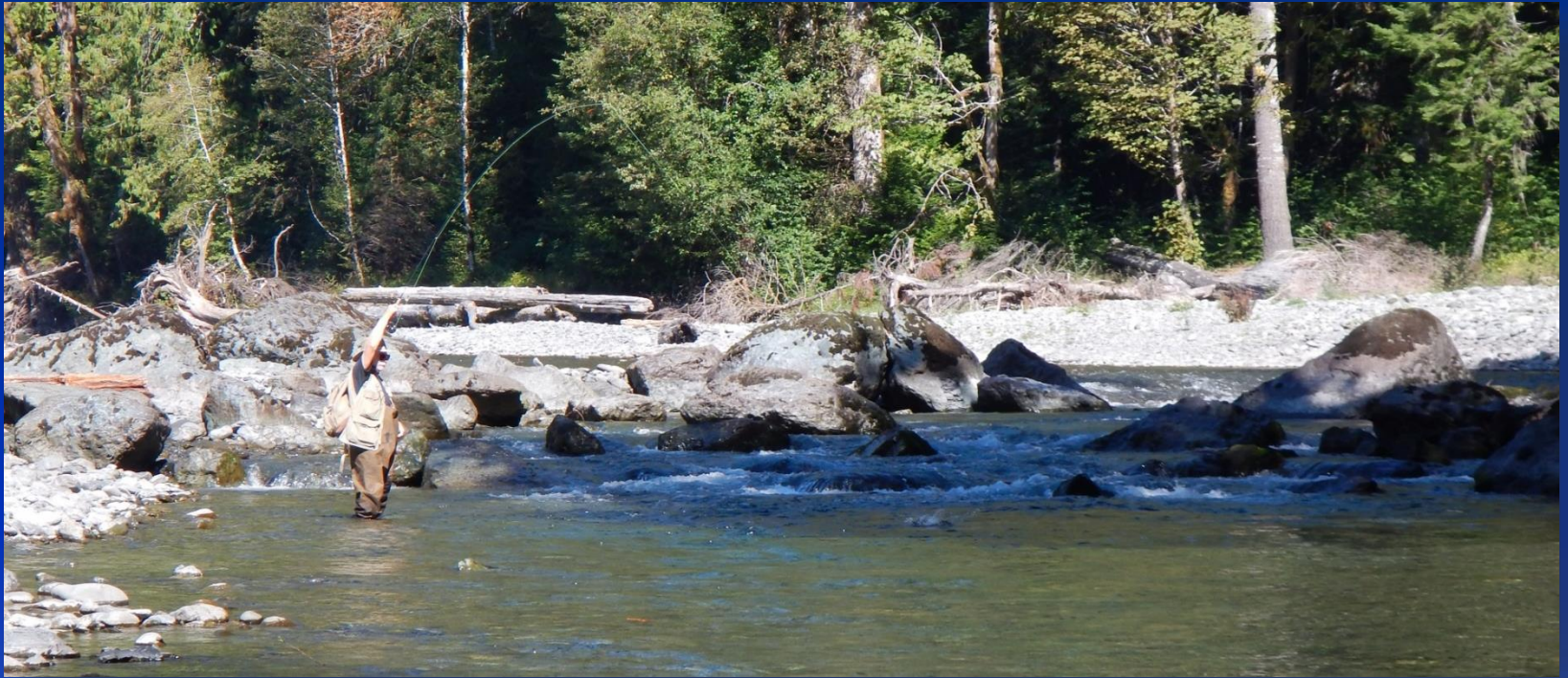


Sport fishing Regulations Simplification 2018-2019



Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting
October 27, 2017

Presentation Outline

- Objectives
- Process
- Timeline and public involvement
- Proposals
- Next Steps

Objective

- One of the most requested changes from Wild Futures meetings
- Reduce the complexity of sportfishing regulations and make the regulations easier for all anglers to understand.
- Changes proposed this year would apply to freshwater throughout the state, with some exceptions.
- Still many exceptions, e.g. steelhead, salmon

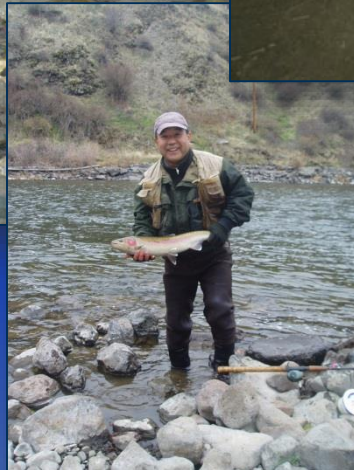
Process

- Three Year Schedule
 - Year 1 (2017): Simplify sport fishing regulations for freshwater species (steelhead, trout, warmwater fish, sturgeon, shad and carp). Rules effective July 1, 2018.
 - Year 2 (2018): Simplify sport fishing regulations for salmon fisheries in marine and freshwaters. Rules effective July 1, 2019.
 - Year 3 (2019): Simplify sport fishing regulations for marine fish and shellfish in Washington coastal and Puget Sound waters. Rules effective July 1, 2020.

Timeline and Public Involvement

- January - August Staff develop proposals
- Sept.-Nov 30. Public comment on proposals (email, press release, website)
- Sept. – Oct Regional public workshops (6)
- **October 27** **Brief Commission**
- November 2 File Regulations, Add to Webpage
- November 30 Public Comment Period Ends
- December 8-9 Public Hearing
- January 19-20, 2018 Commission Action
- July 1, 2018 Rules take effect

General Proposals



Chumming

- **Action:** Eliminate the prohibition of chumming and allow it statewide.
- **Justification:** Provides consistent statewide approach and opportunity for the public to use this method where desired.

When Fishing for Trout with Bait

- **Action:** Eliminate provision that states all trout caught are counted as part of the daily limit whether kept or released.
- **Justification:** Provide opportunity for anglers to continue fishing for the day.

Removing Duplicative Landowner Rules

- **Action:** Remove fishing regulations in WAC and in the pamphlet that are duplicative of local landowner rules and regulations (e.g., county ordinances stating "no use of a floating device equipped with an internal combustion motor.")
- **Justification:** This will reduce the complexity of regulations in the pamphlet and rely on local landowners to post access regulations on site.

Eastern Brook Trout

- **Action:** Standardize fishing regulations for eastern brook trout statewide by requiring no daily limit and no minimum size.
- **Justification:** This change is intended to help increase harvest of Eastern brook trout, which are a non-native trout species that hybridize with native bull trout and compete with other native species in Washington waters.

Possession Limit

- **Action:** Change the game fish possession limit to apply when in field or in transit, aligning the regulations with the definition of the general possession limit rule.
- **Justification:** Provide consistent language for possession limits.

Technical Changes

- **Action:** Adjustments to WAC language for clarity.
- **Justification:** These changes to WAC language clarify the intent of sport fishing regulations and make changes to ease interpretation of rules.

Rivers and Stream Proposals



Stream Season for Gamefish

- **Action:** Open unless otherwise listed.
- **Justification:**
 - Historically managed under this paradigm.
 - Implemented “closed unless listed” in 2010 in Puget Sound.
 - Increased complexity and confusion, especially for smaller and/or unnamed tributaries.
 - Inadvertently lost opportunity.
 - Maintain conservation by opening after majority of smolts have out-migrated, 2 fish daily limit, and 8” minimum size.

Stream Season for Gamefish

- **Action:** Standardize statewide the annual season for rivers, streams and beaver ponds to the Saturday before Memorial Day through October 31.
- **Justification:** Currently there are three dates around the start of June. Reducing this complexity to one season will provide predictable fishing opportunities.

Eliminate Mandatory Steelhead Retention

- **Action:** Remove mandatory steelhead retention requirements.
- **Justification:** Creel information in the mid-Columbia indicates that the rule has had limited additional benefits.

Separate Trout and Steelhead Rules

- **Action:** Provides separate daily limits and sizes for trout and steelhead. Would allow both limits to be retained daily (e.g., two trout and three steelhead). Modify the definition of trout to: "rainbow trout (except steelhead)."
- **Justification:** This will help anglers better understand the daily catch limits and allow them to retain the daily limit of trout and the daily limit of steelhead.

Steelhead Incidental Retention

- **Action:** Modify language to allow the retention of hatchery steelhead in freshwater statewide when open for game fish or salmon.
- **Justification:** Provides consistent statewide approach. Currently incidental retention of hatchery steelhead is only allowed in Puget Sound and on the coast.

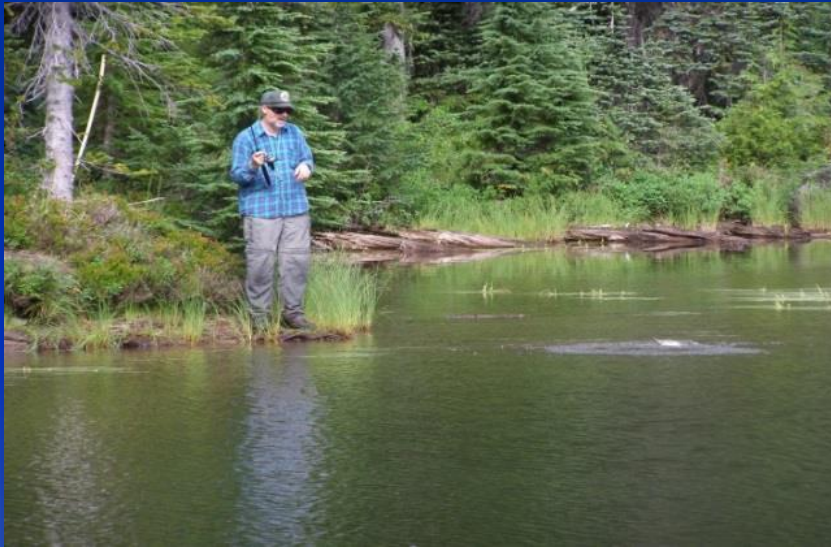
Whitefish Only Rules

- **Action:** Provide consistent standard seasons for fisheries only open to whitefish, December 1 through last day in February.
- **Justification:** Maintain predictable seasons for fisheries only open to whitefish that are consistent with wild steelhead protection.

Statewide Standard Size and Daily Limits – Rivers and Streams

- **Gamefish season:** Open Saturday before Memorial Day through October 31 unless listed otherwise.
- **Wild trout, except brook trout and Dolly Varden/bull trout:** Daily limit 2, minimum size 8 inches.
 - Major coastal cutthroat waters, 2 > 14" or catch and release.
- **Dolly varden/bull trout:** Closed.
- **Brook trout:** No daily limit, no minimum size. Open when open for gamefish or salmon.
- **Hatchery trout:** daily limit 2, no minimum size. Open when open for gamefish or salmon.
- **Bass, channel catfish, and walleye in rivers and streams:** No daily limit, no minimum size. Open when open for gamefish or salmon.

Lakes, Ponds and Reservoirs Proposals



Standardize Juvenile Only Waters

- **Action:** Standardize language regarding eligible participants to allow juveniles, seniors and disabled anglers.
- **Justification:** Provides consistency regarding who can fish at these waters.

Eliminate Pan Fish Special Limits

- **Action:** Remove daily limits for pan fish species, such as bluegill, crappie and perch on specific waters.
- **Justification:** Special limits are not showing benefits to populations.

Statewide Standard Lake Seasons

- **Action:** Reduce the number of seasons and regulations that apply to lakes, ponds and reservoirs.
- **Justification:** Simplifies seasons and regulations for lakes, ponds and reservoirs.
- **Seasons:**
 - Year-round (default)
 - March 1 through September 30
 - March 1 through November 30
 - Fourth Saturday in April through September 30
 - Fourth Saturday in April through October 31
 - Friday after Thanksgiving through March 31

Statewide Standard Daily Limits and Minimum Sizes - Lakes

| Species | Daily Limit | Size Restrictions |
|--------------------|-------------|--|
| Trout | 5 | None |
| Trout | 2 | 14 inch minimum |
| Trout | 1 | 18 inch minimum |
| Trout | None | Catch and Release |
| Kokanee | 10 | None |
| Largemouth Bass | 5 | Bass less than 12 inches or greater than 17 inches, on more than one over 17 |
| Smallmouth Bass | 10 | No more than one 14 inches or greater |
| Walleye | 8 | Minimum size 12 inches, only one over 22 inches |
| Channel Catfish | 5 | None |
| Tiger Musky | 1 | Minimum length 50 inches |
| Panfish | None | None |
| Burbot | 5 | None |
| Whitefish | 15 | None |
| All other gamefish | None | None |

Public Workshops

- Held 6 public workshops, 1 in each region
- Low turnout; 59 total
- Still early in public comment period; continues through 11/30
 - Specific lake and stream proposals needed to provide informed feedback
 - Lively discussions on warmwater, chumming, and bait proposals
- Complete summary of feedback at December meeting

Next Steps

- November 2 File Regulations, Add to Webpage
- November 30 Public Comment Period Ends
- December 8-9 Public Hearing (Olympia)
- January 19-20, 2018 Commission Action (TBD)
- July 1, 2018 Rules take effect

Questions

