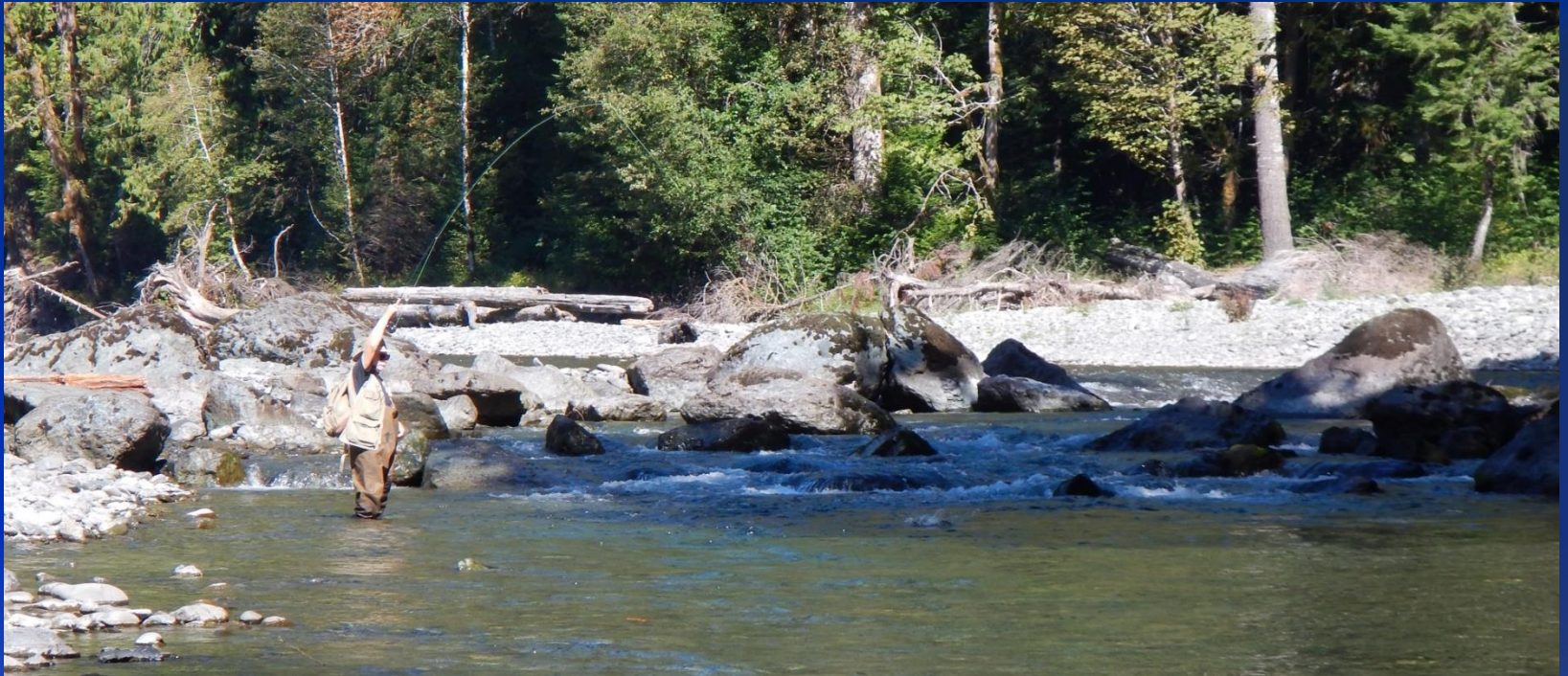


Sport Fishing Rules Simplification 2018-2019



Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting
December 9, 2017

Presentation Outline

- Timeline and public involvement
- Public comments to date
- Questions
- Public Testimony

Timeline and Public Involvement

- January - August Staff develop proposals
- Sept.-Nov 30. Public comment on proposals
- Sept.–Oct Regional public workshops (6)
- October 27 Brief Commission
- November 2 File Regulations, Add to Webpage
- November 30 Public Comment Period Ends
 - Over 933 public comments received (as of 11/21)
- **December 9** **Public Hearing**
- January 19-20, 2018 Commission Action
- July 1, 2018 Rules take effect

Public Comments to Date



Proposals Generating the Most Public Comment:

- 933 comments to date (as of 11/21)
 - Eliminate panfish special limits (29.1%)
 - Allow chumming statewide (9.8%)
 - Eliminate rule regarding fishing for trout with bait. Eliminate rule that allows anglers to release trout caught with bait if they are counted against their daily limit (7.4%)
 - Adjust statewide standard regulations for streams and rivers. Specifically, removal of bag limits on bass, walleye and channel catfish (6.6%).
 - **TOTAL: 52.9%**

1. Allow Chumming Statewide

- Eliminate the prohibition of chumming and allow it statewide.

Public Comments (91): Support (31), Opposed (59)

■ Support

- I am in favor of being able to chum, and don't think it has any negative impact on the water quality.
- I believe it increases opportunity for anglers, especially when pursuing stocked trout.

■ Oppose

- Seems like more potential garbage in the water.
- This is a bad idea and will lead to unnecessary overfishing and collateral damage to other species.

2. Eliminating Minimum Length and Daily Limit on Eastern Brook Trout

- Standardize fishing rules for eastern brook trout statewide by requiring no minimum length and no daily limit statewide.

Public Comments (36): Support (30), Opposed (6)

■ Support

- I support the reduction of non-native species that are having a negative effect on native species and the native ecosystem.

■ Oppose

- There are many lakes that support eastern brook trout that should be managed for a quality fishery.

#3. Eliminate Mandatory Steelhead Retention

- Removes the mandatory steelhead retention requirements

Public Comments (44): Support (34), Opposed (10)

- **Support**

- It is a rule that most fishermen ignored anyway, and enforcement was almost impossible.
- Seems unnecessary, another rule to complicate the regulations.

- **Oppose**

- Multiple studies indicate that hatchery steelhead are detrimental to our declining wild stocks.

4. Eliminate Panfish Special Limits

- Remove daily limits for panfish species on specific waters

Public Comments (272): Support (25), Opposed (247)

■ Support

- I support this policy change. Maybe this will finally thin out stunted panfish in many eastern Washington lakes.

■ Oppose

- Needs to exclude certain bodies of water such as Moses, Potholes, and Banks lakes.
 - **Numerous eastern Washington resorts, sport fishing clubs, local guides, and warmwater anglers have expressed concerns over eliminating bag limits on major waters**
- If you allow people to take any amount of panfish out, other species will suffer not having this source of food.
- People will wipe them out if there are no limits.

5. Consistent Language for Game Fish Possession Limits

- Change the game fish possession limit to apply “when in transit”, aligning the rules with the definition of the general possession limit rule

Public Comments (31): Support (26), Opposed (5)

- **Support**

- Should help with enforcement

- **Oppose**

- You may have 5 limits in your cooler from a 5 day fishing trip when you are driving home. Does this mean that 5 days of limits in your possession after a week of fishing is illegal?

6. Removing Duplicative Landowner Rules

- Remove fishing rules 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.”)

Public Comments (18): Support (9), Opposed (9)

■ Support

- If these restrictions are not set by the department then they should not be listed in the pamphlet.

■ Oppose

- The rules set by the landowners or managing authorities may not be readily available or easily known.

7. Separate Trout and Steelhead Rules

- Provides separate daily limits and sizes for trout and steelhead

Public Comments (40): Support (21), Opposed (19)

- **Support**

- Separating steelhead from trout should make reading and understanding the fishing regulations much easier.

- **Oppose**

- Allowing retention of 'trout' in waters containing steelhead would pose another unnecessary risk to steelhead populations.

8. Statewide Standard Rules for Lakes, Ponds and Reservoirs

- Will reduce the number of seasons and rules that apply to lakes, ponds and reservoirs
- **Statewide standardized season options:**
 - 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

#8 continued

■ Public Comments (56): Support (30), Opposed (26)

■ Support

- I support this proposal. Fewer rules, and the fewer exceptions, avoids confusing anglers.

■ Oppose

- Why not simply reduce to a year-round season in some fisheries and a March 1st (or last Saturday in April) through November 30th season?

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, no more than one over 17 inches daily
Smallmouth bass	10	No more than one 14 inches or greater in length daily
Walleye	8	Minimum size 12 inches only 1 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

9. Standardize Juvenile Only Waters

- Standardize language to allow juveniles, seniors (age 70+), and anglers with a disability who possess a designated harvester companion card only

Public Comments (16): Support (15), Opposed (1)

■ Support

- Now that I am a senior, I am trying to spend time with my grandson a juvenile. It would be fun to fish together.

■ Oppose

- None

10. Statewide Standard Rules for Streams and Rivers

- This set of rule proposals will apply to all stream and rivers as the statewide standardized regulations, unless listed as an exception.
 - **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.
 - **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, walleye, channel catfish, in rivers and streams:** No daily limit, no minimum size. Open when open for gamefish or salmon.

#10 continued

Public Comments (62): Support (27), Opposed (35)

■ Support

- Simple is better, when exploring a new water having to remember a whole new set of rules is a burden
- Fewer rules and fewer exceptions will reduce confusion

■ Oppose

- The current approach of having waters closed unless listed as open is the best approach. Puts a number of species of conservation concern at risk
- I disagree with the walleye/bass/catfish part especially.
 - **Numerous bass and walleye clubs statewide have expressed opposition to this rule change.**

11. Steelhead Incidental Retention

- Allows the retention of hatchery steelhead in freshwater statewide when open for game fish or salmon

Public Comments (28): Support (23), Opposed (5)

■ Support

- Hatchery steelhead should to be harvested to prevent spawning with wild steelhead.

■ Oppose

- Not enough steelhead to go around now. This would surely make the situation worse.

12. Stream Season for Game Fish

- Standardize statewide the annual season for rivers, streams and beaver ponds to the Saturday before Memorial Day through October 31

Public Comments (34): Support (25), Opposed (9)

- **Support**

- It makes logical sense to eliminate multiple dates and provide increased opportunity statewide in the form of an opening date for all the fisheries prior to Memorial Day.

- **Oppose**

- Why not just open rivers and streams on June 1 as it used to be?

13. Rule Regarding Fishing for Trout With Bait

- Eliminates counting trout as part of the daily limit whether kept or released when using bait

Public Comments (69): Support (23), Opposed (46)

- **Support**

- This rule was always unenforceable anyway.
- Would allow more flexibility and opportunity for anglers

- **Oppose**

- Bait should not be considered acceptable for catch-and-release situations.

14. Statewide Standardized Whitefish Season

- This proposal will provide a consistent standard season for fisheries only open to whitefish, December 1 to last day in February.

Public Comments (19): Support (18), Opposed (1)

- **Support**

- If it protects mountain whitefish and steelhead, I am for it.
- Good change

- **Oppose**

- None

Comments Received on Special Rules:

- Posted on website November 2nd
- Allow public to comment on a specific lake/river rule that would appear within Special Rules section of pamphlet
- 50 comments total
 - Diverse array of comments provided
 - Some specific lake and river comments provided
 - Most comments addressed philosophies or opinions on WDFW fish management strategies and rule simplification.

Special Rules (Cont):

- All public comments provided in Commission Summary document
- Special Rule Highlights Include:
 - Allow 2-pole in The Dalles and John Day pools of Columbia River for walleye
 - Opposition to gear restriction change on Little Pend Oreille River
 - Ell Lake (Okanogan Co): change daily trout limit to 1 min size 18"
 - SE WA Lakes (Blue, Rainbow, Spring, Watson, and Curl): retain 2 over 13" rule

Special Rules (Cont):

- Silver Lake (Cowlitz Co): Allow harvest of grass carp
- Coldwater Lake (Cowlitz Co): recommend 10-14" slot limit on trout
- Other Comment Highlights:
 - Concern over wild steelhead protections for multiple SE WA rivers
 - Most all WA lakes should be year-round
 - More protective rules for coastal cutthroat trout in rivers and streams
 - WDFW did and didn't simplify fishing rules

Timeline and Public Involvement

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- November 30 Written Public Comment Deadline
- **December 9** **Public Hearing**
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Questions?



Public Testimony

