



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

State Fish and Wildlife Commission

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March 7, 2017

Dr. Bradley Smith
Chairman
Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, Washington 98501-1091

Dear Chairman Smith,

As you know, in 2012, Washington and Oregon collaborated to adopt policies related to the management of commercial and recreational fisheries in the Columbia River. The overarching purpose of that collaboration was to prioritize recreational fisheries on the lower Columbia River, mitigate impacts to the commercial fishery by enhancing off-channel fisheries, develop alternative commercial fishing techniques and improve conservation of listed species of salmon and steelhead. This process, to ensure concurrence in regulations between the two states, was comprehensive, controversial, and quite emotional for the impacted parties. Yet, despite all the controversy and emotion, we were able to adopt a strategy and develop concurrent regulations. Despite mutual good will exhibited in numerous meetings between the respective staffs and commissioners of the two states to repeat our previous success, the adoption of concurrent policies and regulations has escaped us.

The purpose of this letter is to lay out a revised proposal with rationale, in hopes that we can again achieve concurrence in our mutual management responsibilities on the Columbia River. As you know, these issues, for the most part, relate to allocation between sport and commercial harvest, commercial fishing gear, economic viability, and conservation of native fish and endangered species. Our two states have both scheduled commission meetings in March. It is my hope, that we can find more common ground prior to our respective meetings. The proposal set forth below provides opportunities for give and take. I ask that you consider the following proposals and provide your views to our Oregon Commission prior to our March 17, 2017 meeting.

Upriver Spring Chinook: The two states are concurrent on an 80/20 allocation of endangered species impacts. Oregon allows the use of tangle nets for commercial fishing. Washington prohibits any commercial main stem fishery. Oregon requests that Washington authorize the use of tangle nets in the main stem. This request is based on the fact that Washington agreed to the use of tangle nets, in lieu of gill nets, in the 2012 joint rulemaking. Moreover, a three year study by Oregon and Washington (approved by both NOAA and the tribes) demonstrated that tangle nets are an effective alternative gear with low release mortality rates.

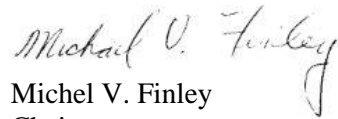
Summer Chinook: The two states are concurrent on an 80/20 allocation of harvest below Bonneville Dam. Oregon proposes that both states prohibit the use of large mesh gill nets during the summer chinook time frame. It is acknowledged that there are currently no alternative gears available to access the commercial fishery share of summer chinook harvest but providing this allocation may lead to innovation that will help inform future alternative gear discussions. An additional collateral benefit of commercial fishing during this time frame is the removal of non-native American Shad which may also provide some economic benefit to the commercial fishery.

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Fall Chinook: The two states are concurrent on commercial fishing gear and fishing areas for the next two years, but are not concurrent on the allocation of endangered species impacts. Washington adopted a 75/25 allocation, while Oregon adopted a 66/34 allocation. A revised Oregon position would be to split the difference at a 70/30 allocation. Oregon commits to working with Washington on evaluating bycatch effects during the next two years. I hope you can meet us at this middle ground in the spirit of collaboration and compromise.

Concurrence is not only important for orderly and enforceable fisheries, but also for optimal economics these fisheries provide our states. In this spirit, Oregon requests consideration of allowing mainstem tangle nets in the spring in return for excluding gillnets in the summer, and splitting the difference of our respective fall allocations. We appreciate your continued effort to work with us on this difficult issue. We also appreciate the time that your staff and Commission have devoted to this issue. We believe that our proposal is a reasonable approach to achieve concurrence for this next phase of Columbia River Fishery management and still honor the needs of and commitments made by the two states.

Sincerely,



Michel V. Finley
Chairman

cc: Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
Jason Miner, Natural Resources Policy Adviser, Governor's Office
Jim Unsworth, Director, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Larry Carpenter, Vice Chair, Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission