



Legislative Update – April 29, 2021

We have much to celebrate regarding the outcome of this year's legislative session, which ended on Sunday, April 25. Below is a list of highlights from the final budgets that were adopted by the Senate and House. CCA and our coalition partners worked hard on many of these issues. A special thanks to all the legislators who made this session a huge success!

Governor Inslee has until May 19 to take action on the budget bills and does have the authority to issue partial vetoes of individual sections. Stay tuned for a future action alert, as we may need your help to ensure all this funding remains intact.

Unless noted otherwise, all the dollar amounts have been provided to WDFW in state general funds.

Columbia River Harvest Reform

In the biggest conservation win for salmon and steelhead this legislative session, \$2 million will be provided for a voluntary buyback of Columbia River non-tribal gillnet licenses tied to the Columbia River gillnet reforms. This also includes language that limits mainstem non-tribal gillnet fisheries to zones 4 & 5 in the fall and reduces their allocation to 20% consistent with the intent of the original bistate reforms. Both the Senate and the House agreed on this language, sending a strong message following last year's Commission vote to drastically expand non-selective mainstem gillnetting and reduce selective recreational fishing opportunity. The budget language represents an important step forward for harvest reform and the conservation of our salmon and steelhead. WDFW opposed the buyback language and had promoted a fleet reduction proposal to increase the profitability of the gillnet industry, a plan that was rejected by the legislature.

Responsible Hatchery Production

As long-standing supporters of hatcheries, CCA once again worked with members of the Senate and House to ensure hatchery programs and production were prioritized in the budget.

- In the Capital Budget, WDFW received \$120 million for improvements to hatcheries and habitat, including the continuation of \$2 million for a new Deschutes Hatchery center and an additional \$300,000 for a feasibility study on a new Cowlitz Hatchery, which would likely increase production of Spring Chinook.
- A \$3.54 million grant will be provided to the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission for increased hatchery production that prioritizes prey abundance for the Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Addressing Pinniped Predation

CCA has continued our efforts to address excessive and un-naturally high levels of predation on salmon and steelhead by pinnipeds in the lower Columbia River during this legislative session, while also working to address pinniped predation in Puget Sound and on the coast.

- \$940,000 to expand efforts to survey the diets of seals and sea lions in Puget Sound and to identify non-lethal management actions to deter them from preying on salmon and steelhead.
- \$140,000 to contract with the Washington Academy of Sciences to provide policymakers with a report on pinniped predation in the Salish Sea and Washington's outer coast. Both actions are viewed as critical next steps to secure greater authority to manage coastal and Puget Sound pinniped populations.
- \$1.506 million for expanded pinniped management in the lower Columbia River and its tributaries following the 2018 passage of federal legislation providing streamlined removal authority.

Supporting Common-Sense Conservation and Recreational Fishing

Throughout the legislative session, CCA and members of the House and Senate have worked to secure funding that would promote fisheries conservation while protecting recreational fishing opportunity.

- \$90,000 to complete a Cowlitz River hook mortality study that will likely highlight the selectivity of hook and release recreational fisheries.
- \$1.68 million to improve steelhead spawning estimates for improved fishing regulations such that enhanced conservation and equitable fisheries are established. This supports on the "[portfolio approach](#)" to steelhead management developed by a broad coalition of angling groups, including CCA Washington.
- \$200,000 for an Olympic peninsula, Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay steelhead management plan. The plan must be reported to the appropriate committees of the legislature by Dec 1, 2022 and is widely viewed as a response to WDFW's recent sudden decision to shut down coastal steelhead fisheries.
- In addition, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) will receive \$250,000 for the Spokane tribe of Indians for a pilot study of salmon migratory behavior and survival upstream of the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. RCO will also receive \$3.6 million for a grant to implement near-term solutions to prevent steelhead mortality at the Hood Canal Bridge.
- \$502,000 for the suppression and eradication of invasive northern pike in the Columbia River. CCA previously [wrote a letter in support](#) of this funding.