A Different Kind of Derby

By Don McBride, CCA Tri-Cities Derby Chairman

When someone says “salmon derby” the first images that come to mind usually include crowds, combat fishing and photos of big fish being held up by lucky, or skilled, anglers. Those are all great images but CCA Tri-Cities president Nathan Grimm and derby chairman Don McBride achieved a different vision with this year’s first annual “King of the Reach” live broodstock salmon derby. This event, the first of its kind for CCA Washington, was a cooperative effort between CCA Tri-Cities, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Grant County Public Utility District (GCPUD). It entailed a no-kill fishing derby as a means to collect wild fall Chinook for hatchery production.

Taking place over the weekend of October 25th to 27th, the derby was a great success! The timing of the derby, held the weekend after the closure of the regular salmon season in the Hanford Reach, ensured that salmon were aggressive and the crowds were minimal; nobody was there except the derby participants. And, because all of the anglers were there to help with hatchery production, it was a friendly and cooperative group with a fun atmosphere.

One challenge experienced by the derby anglers was heavy fog on the first two days of the derby; these conditions provided minimal visibility in the early morning hours. For those willing to forge their way through the fog there were fish to be caught. Most everyone agreed that overall catch rates would have been even higher with better weather conditions.

What were those catch rates? In total, 77 anglers in 34 boats delivered over 400 wild salmon. The top boat, captained by Dan Charboneau, brought in an astounding 64 wild fish during the three-day derby, while Dana Mueller won top individual honors with 42 fish. More importantly, perhaps, is that sport fishers proved once again that hook-and-line angling is the most effective method of selective fishing. Amazingly, out of the 400+ fish turned in, only four were lost between the time they were caught and transported to the drop-off, resulting in an immediate mortality rate of only 1%!

The derby proved to be a success not only for the participants and the fish, but especially in forging an outstanding working relationship between CCA, WDFW and GCPUD. Crowds? Nope. Combat fishing? Nope. Lots of grip and grin photos of dead fish? Nope. But the participants, many of whom camped at Vernita for the weekend, are chomping at the bit to be part of the fun for next year’s derby, already being planned for October 24-26, 2014.

WDFW employee Mike Erickson demonstrates safe handling of a healthy Hanford Reach wild buck going into the collection truck at White Bluffs. Salmon were collected at Vernita Bridge and White Bluffs, and also in a shuttle boat picking up fish from anglers along the river near Coyote Rapids.

Utilizing sport fishermen to catch wild broodstock for hatchery production is not a new concept. It became a reality for the Priest Rapids Hatchery, located at the upper end of the famed Hanford Reach between Vernita Bridge and Desert Aire, thanks in large part to WDFW biologist, Paul Hoffarth. His goal was to implement recommendations of the Hatchery Scientific Review Group to increase wild salmon genetics into the ten million plus smolts released annually at the Priest Rapids Hatchery. In the fall of 2012, CCA and WDFW coordinated a pilot project to determine if Fall Chinook, caught by recreational anglers, could be transported live to the Priest Rapids Hatchery. The successful effort in 2012, with only one salmon mortality out of 69 fish collected, prompted CCA and WDFW to undertake a more substantial collection effort in 2013. In order to maximize angler participation, a derby format was utilized.

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Individual winner Dana Mueller braves the fog for a wild buck.
Puget Sound Crab Update

By Heath Heikkila, CCA Regional Fisheries Director

On October 1, the Washington Supreme Court denied an appeal from commercial crab interests seeking to reverse an Appeals Court decision upholding the Puget Sound Dungeness Crab Fishery Policy. The Supreme Court’s decision came exactly three years to the day after the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted the landmark new policy to prioritize recreational crabbing in Puget Sound. While three years of legal maneuvering by commercial crab interests may be over, in many ways the policy and the maneuvering by commercial crab interests seeking to reverse an Appeals Court decision upholding the policy and the policy-making authority and makeup of the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife will remain essentially unchanged.

The decision has been viewed by many as a victory for CCA and recreational crabbers, but this victory has come at a price. This price is the loss of our non-tribal gillnet fishery, which has been a significant contributor to our state’s fisheries for decades. The loss of this fishery is a significant blow to our state’s fishing community, and it is a blow that will be felt for decades to come.

Thank You, Ed Wickersham!

By Andy Marks, CCA Washington Government Relations Committee Chairman

As many of you know, over the past several years CCA Washington has achieved some historic milestones in the advocacy arena as a result of good work by the Government Relations Committee. The policy-making authority and the department shall promote orderly fisheries and stabilize the fishing industry in the state. The Columbia River gillnet fisheries have been threatened by non-tribal gillnets from both Oregon and Washington (CCA has formally intervened in both cases). The policy-making authority and the department has intervened in the Columbia River, which is noted above.

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The Commission’s crab policy has been followed by other victories, including a similar policy guiding management of Puget Sound’s spot shrimp fishery and a historic plan to ban non-tribal gillnets from the mainstem Columbia River. In each case the Commission has based its decision in consideration of the relevant conservation and socioeconomic objectives noted above. Meanwhile, the Columbia River gillnet fisheries have been threatened by non-tribal gillnets from both Oregon and Washington.

This decision, and the subsequent Supreme Court decision upholding the policy, have been viewed by many as a victory for CCA and recreational crabbers, but this victory has come at a price. This price is the loss of our non-tribal gillnet fishery, which has been a significant contributor to our state’s fisheries for decades. The loss of this fishery is a significant blow to our state’s fishing community, and it is a blow that will be felt for decades to come.

Ed commanded great respect and coordinated a robust GRC during his tenure as chairperson. We look to further Ed’s tradition of excellence by growing the GRC and becoming more influential across the state in our advocacy efforts. CCA volunteers will continue to do the heavy lifting that they have always done, and we are creating a better framework for those volunteers to get more involved. By developing geographically based GRC sub-committees, I am confident we can be even more strategic in our advocacy and engage more volunteers in that process.

Much like every member-driven organization, it takes engaged volunteers to make things happen. Money doesn’t grow on trees, new members don’t fall out of the sky, and advocacy issues don’t solve themselves. As we grow and mature, the GRC needs more concerned citizens who care about the future of our fisheries to step up and help CCA achieve its goals. I didn’t know much about fisheries politics when I made the decision to get involved a few short years ago, but because of folks like Ed Wickersham I got involved and I got informed. Thanks again, Ed. Here’s to continuing the tradition of conservation that Ed has laid out for us. I hope you’ll join me in that tradition.

CCA Legislator of the Year

This year’s “Legislator of the Year” awards have been presented to Representative Chris Reykdal (District 22) and Senator John Braun (District 20) for their commitment to conservation and enhancing our fisheries. Senator Braun worked tirelessly during session to secure funding in the operating and capital budgets for the Cowiche Fall Chinook project. Not only will this result in the production of additional hatchery fish, but more importantly, it provides an opportunity to determine if we can increase survival rates of hatchery fish by raising them in net pens. In the House, Representative Reykdal was instrumental in securing funds in the capital budget for the Deschutes River Project which will eventually result in a new, state-of-the-art hatchery on the Deschutes River in Olympia. Thank you Senator Braun and Representative Reykdal for your commitment to conservation and our fisheries.

Senator Braun is congratulated by CCA Washington lobbyist Scott Sigmon for his “Legislator of the Year” award.

Representative Reykdal, alongside Scott Sigmon, proudly accepts his CCA award in front of the Capitol Building.
Staying the Course

Stan Brogdon, CCA Washington State President

I often tell people that if I could elk hunt nine months a year, I wouldn’t even own a boat. Elk hunting is truly my favorite way to spend time on this planet. With that said, I do greatly enjoy fishing and trying to solve the puzzle of what turns fish on, a mystery that usually has at least a slightly different answer everyday I’m on the water.

So, why do I even mark elk hunting in the Ripple Effect? Well, there’s a well known saying in elk hunting circles that goes something like “...shooting an elk is the end of the hunt, but the beginning of the work...” Removing gillnets from the Columbia River was one of the original goals of CCA when we established our chapters in the Northwest, and as of this earlier year this plan to remove them from the mainstem is now official policy in both Oregon and Washington. While this is truly a historic achievement that could not have been accomplished without all of our members’ dedication and hard work, we are just getting started.

Last month, 18 years after the citizens of Florida voted 72% in favor of adopting a state Constitutional Amendment that includes both a prohibition on the use of gill nets in all state waters and a size limit on other nets, the small but still vocal gillnet lobby somehow convinced a local Circuit Court Judge to overrule that Amendment. For the next several days gillnetters in neighboring states scrambled to gather gear and get to Florida in order to take advantage of the recent judgment that somehow convinced a local Circuit Court Judge to overrule that Amendment.

The point is, we all need to realize that even with how far we’ve come to control. And as we have in the past, here and elsewhere, CCA and our passionate members and an organized strategy to accomplish it.

We are also currently involved in lawsuits on both sides of the river to control. And as we have in the past, here and elsewhere, CCA and our passionate members and an organized strategy to accomplish it.

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Growing in the Digital World

By Tyler Comeau, CCA Washington Assistant Director

Embracing social media is a critical component to growing awareness of CCA: Washington, increasing membership, and communicating with members and media alike. In order to more effectively connect with our friends and fans, this year CCA Washington created brand new Facebook and Twitter pages.

The CCA Washington Facebook page has been active for nearly nine months and features hundreds of “likes” from concerned anglers, community members and friends. Similar to our banquet, the focus of our Facebook page is fun, fun and more fun. Member fishing photos, banquet photos and updates, and other fun interactions are commonplace on this page. We recently held our first ever Facebook contest and in the first week our page was exposed to over 2,000 different people.

The CCA Washington Twitter account also came online in early 2013. Twitter is a unique resource for CCA in that our “followers” include, among others, outdoor journalists who use Twitter to follow CCA and CCA events. The Steelhead Challenge and Wetnose Salmon Derby were both featured on mainstream media websites because of Twitter posts. Aside from the media exposure, we also post photos, chapter meeting news, and advocacy links to our Twitter account.

If you have content for either our Facebook or Twitter accounts please send them to info@ccawashington.org. That includes chapter level news and events. The Steelhead Challenge and Wetnose Salmon Derby were both featured on mainstream media websites because of Twitter posts. Aside from the media exposure, we also post photos, chapter meeting news, and advocacy links to our Twitter account.

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If you are not doing so already, please follow us on Facebook (Coastal Conservation Association Washington) and Twitter (@CCAWash) and, most importantly, ask your friends to follow us too! Quick links to our social media pages can be found on the CCA Washington website at www.ccawash.org.

CCA Success Story: Identifying Derelict Nets

By Nello Piccinich, CCA Washington Executive Director

Over the last several years CCA Washington chapters have participated in a number of different habitat projects including streamside clean-up, tree plantings, noxious weed eradication and countless nutrient enhancement events. All of these projects not only help promote volunteerism but they are also worthwhile conservation projects. However, there is one type of habitat project where we have proven to be particularly successful - identifying derelict, or lost, commercial nets.

In 2010, a group of CCA members and concerned recreational anglers documented more than 60 derelict nets in a stretch of the Nooksack River. Ultimately, after dozens of letters and hundreds more e-mails, phone calls and meetings, a clean-up project was initiated and continued to this day. In total, it is estimated that more than 100 derelict nets have been removed from the Nooksack River. It all started with passionate members and an organized survey.

When this project was initiated, we alerted WDFW of our findings and what followed from the Department was surprising. A letter from the Director acknowledged the problem of derelict nets on the Nooksack River.

In his letter to CCA, the Director also stated “The observations of derelict nets observed on the Nooksack River is not unique; it plagues many of our Western Washington rivers.” We had all known that derelict nets were a huge problem in Puget Sound, killing thousands of marine species every year, but it was a surprise indeed to learn that these silent killers also plagued our freshwater rivers.

One of the many derelict nets found along the banks of the Nooksack River and an example of the destruction caused by these silent killers.

Derelict nets being recovered from the Chelhish River.

As a recreational community we are in a unique, and for many of us obligatory, position to do more than any other user group in conserving our fisheries and fish resources. The commercial sector cannot come close to matching the sheer number of individuals that make-up the recreational sector. Nor can the commercial sector come close to matching our economic contributions. Consumers, at least the ones I know, give little thought to the conservation of the resource. Our strength is our economic stability, and our passion are what define us and, more importantly, what set us apart from these other user groups.

As a member of CCA Washington you have acknowledged that we, as a recreational community, can make a difference in the conservation of our marine resources. Thank you! As we look to the past, I am encouraged by what we have accomplished and as we look to the future, I am energized by what we have yet to gain. Like the dedicated volunteers from our North Sound and Twin Harbors chapters, I look forward to our members pioneering new ways to conserve our resources.

WDFW Officer Ryan Valentine accepts an award from CCA Washington Vice President Marcus Schumacher for his efforts in recovering derelict nets from the Nooksack River.

Shortly after learning this, our Twin Harbors chapter took on the challenge of identifying derelict nets in the Chelish River. In this instance we were fortunate to be part of a larger group that was working to identify and remove these nets. It was, once again, a successful project. Over the course of several years approximately 100 nets and net fragments have been recovered from the Chelishis River.
2013 Derby Winners

This year, three of your chapters hosted local, CCA derbies. During the sunny weekend of July 19-21, the North Central Washington chapter hosted the 2nd Annual CCA Wenatchee Salmon Derby and the Lower Columbia chapter hosted the 1st Annual Steelhead Challenge. This fall, as reported in a previous article, the Tri-Cities chapter hosted the 1st Annual King of the Reach Derby. Planning is already underway for all three of these derbies which will all be taking place again in 2014.

Congratulations to all of the 2013 derby winners and a huge “thank you” to all the volunteers who made these derbies a success!

Tyler Anderson (left), winner of the Wenatchee Salmon Derby biggest fish category, collects his $2,000 prize from chapter president, Steve Hett. Tyler’s gillnet and gilled Chinook weighed over 22 pounds.

Steelhead Challenge winner Leon Stevenson with his first place fish. This summer steelhead, gutted and gilled, weighed in at over 12 pounds.

Dan Charbonneau hides behind a lively hen Chinook. To claim his title, Dan’s crew brought in 64 wild salmon during the three-day event. Who will be crowned “King of the Reach” in 2014?

2014 Spring Banquet Dates

With fourteen successful banquets, including multiple sold out events, 2013 was a banner year for CCA Washington fundraising efforts. CCA derbies which will all be taking place again in 2014.

Economics of Fishing

While recreational anglers landed just two percent of total saltwater landings they contributed three times more to the national gross domestic product than commercial landings.

(Source: American Sportfishing Association)
Coastal Conservation Association Membership Application

MEMBER INFORMATION

- Renewal Dues  
- New Membership

Name __________________________________________

Associate Member Name(s) (if applicable) ______________________________

Member ID# (if renewing) _____________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

City/State ___________________________ Zip ______________

Phone ____________________________ Email ____________________________

Gift Membership From: ____________________________________________

- $25 MEMBER: Membership card, window decal, 2 bumper stickers, TIDE magazine.
- $100 MEMBER: All of the above plus CCA print of your choice
- $15 ASSOCIATE: Per each family member. All member privileges except TIDE. Send names.
- $200 SPONSOR: Bronze lapel pin, print, plus member gifts.
- $500 PATRON: Silver lapel pin, print, plus member gifts.
- $1,000 LIFE MEMBER: Life Member display piece, print, plus member gifts.
- Quarterly payment option available.
- $10 NEW TIDE: Rising Tide newsletter, three NEW TIDE logo decals, iron-on T-shirt transfer, redfish & speckled trout sticker. For members 17 and younger.

METHOD OF PAYMENT

- Cash Enclosed
- Check or Money Order Enclosed
- Mastercard  
- Amex
- Visa  
- Discover

Credit Card # ____________________________
Exp. Date ____________________________

Signature ____________________________________________
Associate Member Name __________________________________

Complete this form and send to:
Coastal Conservation Association
1006 W. 11th Street
Vancouver, WA 98660
Ph. 877-255-8772
Ph. 360-694-4300
www.ccawashington.org