By Nello Picinich

In early 2013, the respective Departments of Fish & Wildlife in both Washington and Oregon adopted Columbia River fishery reforms that were intended to phase out the use of non-selective gillnets by non-tribal fishers in the lower mainstem Columbia River. This was seen by conservationists in our region as a significant win for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon.

Nearly four years later, while much has been accomplished, we await a decision by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on the future of concurrent management on the Columbia River. As CCA has been actively advocating for full implementation of the plan, we reflect back on the lengthy and inclusive process that led to the plan’s initial adoption.

After a ballot measure in Oregon to ban commercial fishing became a reality, then Governor Kitzhaber brokered a compromise plan between his state and Washington. He initiated a collaborative process that included a bi-state workgroup of more than thirty advisors who participated in three meetings.

From Oregon this included three Commission members, the Director of ODFW, nine senior staff from ODFW, two commercial representatives, two sportfishing representatives and a representative from Clatsop County. Washington provided three Commissioners plus an alternate, the Director of WDFW, five senior staff from WDFW, two commercial representatives and two sportfishing representatives. Not only was this a diverse group of individuals from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, but it also included advisors from the recreational community, commercial community and conservation community.

In addition, there was a professional mediator hired to help manage the bi-state workgroup meetings. These took place over a three month period in three different locations – Olympia, Portland and Seaside. There were approximately 200 people at the Seaside meeting, in the heart of gillnetter territory, and more than two-thirds of those in attendance were in support of the plan to remove gillnets from the lower mainstem Columbia River. Public comment was received at each of these meetings and the public was also allowed to comment at their respective Commission meetings before, during and after this process concluded.

Needless to say a tremendous amount of the public’s time, resources and money were invested in this lengthy process. We ask our fisheries managers to stick with the conservation principles of the plan they agreed to four years ago. The future of healthy salmon, steelhead and sturgeon stocks are dependent upon these conservation principles. Please stay the course.
A new “Recreational Priority” bill, HB 1229, was recently introduced by Rep. Liz Pike (18th District) along with 10 other sponsoring Washington state representatives. The bill, similar to 2015’s HB 1660, would alter an important part of WDFW’s mission and would essentially require that economics be used in fisheries management decisions. Despite the statewide and impressive bi-partisan backing of the bill, House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Brian Blake (19th District) has thus far indicated that he would not allow a hearing on the bill in his committee.

HB 1229 adds a new law (RCW) that recognizes the vastly superior economic benefits behind recreational fishing in Washington. The bill notes that recreational anglers contributed $71 million in licenses and fees in the last budget cycle versus just $1.5 million from the commercial sector. That is forty seven times more than the commercial sector’s contribution to the department’s budget.

Pike was the original sponsor of HB 1660 two years ago and she continues to spearhead legislation that promotes recreational fishing and common-sense conservation efforts. To promote her current efforts with HB 1229, Pike embarked on a media tour which included appearances on The Lars Larson Show as well as Northwest Wild Country with Duane Inglin and Joel Shangle. This media coverage has been multiplied with newspaper articles, fishing and conservation blogs and angler forums abuzz with talk of the efforts.

Sadly, without a hearing the bill will die in committee which is a loss for recreational anglers and the fisheries that we aim to conserve. HB 1229 is further evidence of the growing understanding that recreational fishing is an economic driver for not only the state but also for WDFW. With such a diverse group of sponsoring legislators representing hundreds of thousands of Washington residents, the message of economics and conservation is winning the hearts and minds of our decision makers.

Regardless of the outcome of this legislative session, we appreciate all of the legislators (Rep. Pike, Pollet, Pettigrew, Shea, Taylor, Vick, Springer, Goodman, Harris, Kraft, and Young) for their commitment to conservation and recreational fishing.
Puget Sound salmon fishing seasons for this summer and fall, and for the winter-spring of 2018, will be developed through the public meetings and associated state-tribal negotiation process known as “North of Falcon.” This process is incredibly complicated due to the many different tribal and governmental agencies involved, and it has proven to be controversial among recreational anglers. CCA, along with others, will once again be involved in the process with representation at the upcoming meetings.

Key Topics

State-managed fisheries affecting Chinook salmon listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) must be permitted by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The permitting process is unnecessarily complicated by the “requirement” for tribal and state authorities, who often have differing conservation concerns, to reach agreement. What is interesting however is that this requirement applies only to the non-tribal fisheries as we have been told that without agreement, tribal fisheries may receive a permit to proceed with their fisheries. This naturally lends itself to an unbalanced negotiation process, at least for this year’s decision.

Very low abundance of Puget Sound coho salmon is predicted, with special concerns for wild stocks. This will likely limit coho fisheries, especially in freshwater areas of northern Puget Sound. However, selective fishing for hatchery stocks may provide openings in many marine water fisheries.

The ESA listed status of Puget Sound Chinook will again necessitate very conservative sport fisheries and will likely also feature selective fishing for hatchery stocks throughout Puget Sound with few exceptions.

In-season changes to sport fisheries are made on an emergency or unscheduled basis. WDFW is expected to challenge this aspect of the co-management process which has been disruptive to planning and infrastructure support.

Final Decisions

Final decisions for Puget Sound fisheries will take place in Sacramento during the week of April 7-11. Although these meetings are open to the public, it is unfortunate that direct public input is limited at the final meetings of the 2017 North of Falcon process. Seasons for all fisheries will be available by news release immediately after final decisions are made.

How to Get Involved

For those primarily interested in Puget Sound, certain meetings open to the public will provide valuable information focused on marine and freshwater fisheries. Attendees have the opportunity to offer opinions or recommendations to WDFW decision-makers at these public sessions. The entire decision-making process extends over a two-month period from late February through mid-April. More details on these meetings, including meeting dates can be found at wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/northfalcon/.

Final Local Public Meeting

A concluding local meeting will take place on April 4 in Lynnwood. Since final decisions on seasons will be made in California the following week, this is the final opportunity for the general public to participate in open discussions with WDFW decision-makers about Puget Sound fisheries. Updated technical information, including results of analyses requested at March meetings, will be presented. Results from state-tribal negotiations will also be discussed as well as preferred options for sport fisheries.

Attendees have the opportunity to offer opinions or recommendations to WDFW decision-makers at several public meetings.
Sportsmen’s Show 2017

The 2017 Washington Sportsmen’s Show in Puyallup was another successful event for CCA. Over twenty members staffed the booth during its five day run with over sixty CCA memberships sold and processed. The Sportsmen’s Show is a great environment to discuss fishery issues and CCA with our supporters and the general public.

This year we featured new signage and materials that showcased our grassroots efforts. Most notable was the new CCA “sail” sign that surely made a statement when you walked into the venue. You couldn’t miss it! Many vendors also displayed CCA Donor & Supporter signage that made a nice impression.

We look forward to participating at the new Monroe Sportsmen’s Show this April and thank all of those who staffed and visited the booth in Puyallup.

CCA Expanding Presence in Eastern Washington

After the founding of the Hells Canyon chapter in 2016, CCA Washington is now looking north to formally establish the Inland Empire chapter in the greater Spokane area. In order to better serve sports anglers and conservationists in the Evergreen State’s second largest city, CCA has scheduled multiple fishing seminars and meetings along with an inaugural banquet. The first seminar was held at the Spokane Sportsman’s Warehouse store in late January and it was a big success with 86 attendees in the room learning about CCA.

Upriver anglers often drive three hours or more to chase anadromous fish and the non-selective gillnet practices in the Lower Columbia can negatively affect these upriver fisheries. The hope is that continued growth among the Eastern Washington chapters will help spread public awareness of the problems affecting our fisheries from the Pacific to the headwaters.

We hope to see another great turnout at our next event on April 15th featuring a Spring Chinook seminar from guide Troy Black of Blacky’s Guide Service. If you or a friend are interested in attending future meetings or would like to get involved with the leadership team, please contact Adam Wilson at 877-255-8772. The Inaugural Inland Empire Chapter Banquet is scheduled for May 19th at the Inland NW Wildlife Council Building in Spokane.

2017 Artist of the Year – Jason Bordash

CCA Washington is proud to announce Jason Bordash as our 2017 Artist of the Year. The University Place resident is not only an avid angler but he is also nationally renowned for his watercolor artistry with a particular focus on fish and fishing scenes. This year, Jason has crafted “Almost Home” which depicts a chrome bright Lake Washington sockeye salmon inspired by a photo from Ingrid Taylor.

Having been a CCA member and donor for over five years, Jason has put his own special touch on each piece of artwork crafted for CCA and “Almost Home” is no different. CCA Washington’s 2017 banquets are the only place where you can purchase an “Almost Home” print.
The Science Behind It: King of the Reach Live Capture Derby

For the fifth straight year, the CCA Tri Cities Chapter has coordinated a groundbreaking live capture fishing derby on the Hanford Reach section of the Columbia River that is garnering attention from around the region for its contribution to science-based hatchery practices. The King of the Reach Live Capture Derby is a three-day event co-hosted by CCA Tri Cities, Grant County PUD and WDFW with two drop-off/registration sites at the Vernita and White Bluffs access areas. 2016’s edition of the event saw a record 115 anglers participate, contributing 309 wild Fall chinook salmon to the Priest Rapids Hatchery.

Over five years of hosting the derby, 775 angler days have resulted in 1,598 wild fish caught for hatchery production. These fish are used at the hatchery complex to introduce wild genetics into the production of Fall chinook. This is necessary both to the quality of fish produced from the hatchery and also to comply with HSRG guidelines set by WDFW and NOAA. In 2016, 15% of all hatchery produced Fall chinook in the Hanford Reach will have genetics sourced from the KOTR derby.

With five years of derby data compiled by WDFW biologist Paul Hoffarth, we are able to better demonstrate how the derby works and how hook and line caught fish fared after being caught, handled, and transported to the waiting hatchery trucks. The low mortality rates are certainly eye opening!

Immediate mortality was just 1.1%. That number is remarkable considering these fish are removed from the river, placed in an aerated live tank (simply a typical cooler with an aerator) then transferred to a WDFW tanker truck at the boat launch. 48 hour mortality rates are especially low at 2%. This mortality rate is based upon the first 48 hours the fish spend at the hatchery, after being transferred from the boat launch to the hatchery holding ponds.

After this 48-hour period the fish are held at the hatchery until they are spawned. Remarkably, there is no statistically significant difference in mortality rates between those fish that were caught in the derby and those that swam into the hatchery on their own.

Thank you to the staff at Grant County PUD and WDFW for their co-ordination and funding of the event and to the CCA volunteers and participants who make it happen. We look forward to co-hosting another great King of the Reach derby in late October 2017.

---

ENGEL Coolers high performance coolers & drinkware are built for more than just keeping things cold. Rugged, durable, and heavy duty. When the heat cranks up, ENGEL is here to cool things down.

Phone 561-743-7419 • engelcoolers.com
The Columbia River White Sturgeon population is continuing to show downward juvenile and broodsize population trends based on data from biologists. Largely due to effects of overharvest in 80's and 90's, the sturgeon population continues to dwindle while many anglers sit on the banks in hope of a retention fishery in the future. Despite a growing number of legal class fish, a small number of spawning females combined with sea lion predation and continued gillnet bycatch is proving problematic to juvenile recruitment.

As the largest freshwater fish in North America, the white sturgeon can attain lengths of up to 20 feet, but they are also extremely slow to grow and mature. In Oregon and Washington, a legal size sturgeon on the Lower Columbia River (38” to 54”) is typically 9-21 years of age. A spawning class or mature adult fish (broodsize) is often 25 years and older. In 2015, the broodsize population estimate for the Lower Columbia sturgeon population was only 3,039 fish. About half of the broodsize fish are female, and since they spawn only once every three to five years, that means the spawning female population is less than 500 fish annually. This is of utmost concern to conservationists and sturgeon enthusiasts.

Since 2010, young of the year sampling has indicated low recruitment of juvenile sturgeon into the population and this trend could worsen unless we get more legal size sturgeon into the broodsize class. By definition, a healthy sturgeon population should be composed of nearly 95% juvenile fish. As of 2010, the Columbia population juvenile component was around 91% and has decreased to only 69% in 2015. That drop off is incredibly alarming.

Understanding how we got to the present situation is certainly important. A large part of our current predicament is the legacy effects mentioned from over harvest in the late twentieth century. Another factor impacting sturgeon is predation from Stellar Sea Lions. These Sea Lions have been observed eating mature sturgeon since the mid 2000s and simultaneously the numbers of sturgeon found in the typical spawning grounds below Bonneville dam have continued to decrease. There is speculation and circumstantial evidence that broodsize sturgeon have spread out and are utilizing smaller tributaries to evade predators, but the impact of this potential migration on spawning success is not known.

Commercial gillnetting for fall chinook in zones 4-5 is another likely cause for continued reproductive failures of the Columbia white sturgeon population. In 2010, a WDFW fisheries observer estimated that 690 broodsize sturgeon were handled during fall salmon gillnet fisheries. Scientific studies have documented that excessive handling in gillnets of mature sturgeon can cause elevated cortisol levels. This stress results in reabsorption of their eggs causing lost spawning opportunity. With less than 500 spawning females available each year, losing any of their spawning productivity due to stress from bycatch loss should be unacceptable to fisheries managers.

While overall sturgeon numbers are down, there is a silver lining. The legal population of white sturgeon in the Columbia is continuing to expand, due in part to limited harvest from 2011 through 2013 and no harvest the past three seasons. Most of these fish are currently in the lower range of the legal classification and it could be another decade before they reach spawning age, but there is hope for the future if we continue to advocate for responsible sturgeon conservation including the elimination of non-selective gillnets from the lower Columbia River.
Member Photo Spotlight

Check out these great catches by CCA Washington members and supporting guides. Submit your photos to info@ccawashington.org to share in the next edition of the Ripple Effect. All chosen submissions will receive a selection of CCA merchandise.

CCA Kitsap member Christopher Dieringer shows off a Puget Sound chinook.

CCA Southwest Washington member Terry Wallingford with an early Columbia tributary Spring Chinook.

CCA Pierce County member Jonathan Tachell with a gorgeous native Winter Steelhead from the Olympic Peninsula.

Contact Us

Washington Office
11805 NE 99th Street Suite 1350
Vancouver, WA 98682
877-255-8772

Comments or questions?
Please contact: info@ccapnw.org

Layout By

Purple Sail CREATIVE LLC
www.purplesailcreative.com

BorX O Fire Is Like Candy To Steelhead

Get Your First Drift, Every Drift!

www.pautzke.com
Coastal Conservation Association Membership Application

MEMBER INFORMATION

- Renewal Dues
- New Membership

Name ____________________________________________________________

Associate Member Name(s) (if applicable) _______________________________________

Member ID# (if renewing) ________________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________________________

CityState ________________ Zip _____________

Phone __________________ Email __________________

Gift Membership From: ________________________________________________

- $30 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
11805 NE 99th Street Suite 1350
Vancouver, WA 98682
Ph. 877-255-8772
Ph. 360-694-4300
www.ccawashington.org