Commission Chooses Gillnetting Over Conservation

Conservationists and recreational anglers were once again betrayed in what seems like a never-ending battle between common-sense conservation and the use of destructive, antiquated fishing gear. The Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission voted to return gillnets to the lower mainstem Columbia River in 2019. The dismantling of the previously pro-conservation Commission by Governor Inslee and his staff, along with constant undermining of the Columbia River policy by WDFW staff, lead to this latest travesty. Returning gillnets to the lower mainstem Columbia River is in stark contrast to the Governor’s promises to help imperiled salmon and Southern Resident Killer Whales.

At its March meeting in Spokane, the Commission voted to undo the Columbia River fishery reforms by a vote of five to one with two Commissioners abstaining. Commissioner Dave Graybill of Wenatchee was the sole “No” vote. The vote restores non-tribal gillnetting in the lower Columbia River during this year’s spring and summer seasons (though these fisheries are doubtful due to low run sizes) and increases mainstem gillnetting during the fall – harming salmon, steelhead, and reducing recreational angling opportunity throughout the Columbia River and Snake basin.

The action, championed by Commissioner Don Mclsaac, was voted upon and adopted without advance public notice, nor review or comment of the policy proposal— a dark day in the history of the Commission and WDFW.

Even more perplexing was the timing of the decision. It was made despite dismal spring, summer, and fall chinook forecasts which will result in reduced fishing seasons and serious conservation concerns. The decision is an insult to the 225,000 anglers who purchase the $8.75 Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement, which WDFW is asking the legislature to extend this year along with a 15% fishing license fee increase. The decision also comes as our legislature was debating a bill to permanently ban non-tribal gillnets in the Columbia River.

The initial Columbia River Reforms Policy has suffered from Oregon backtracking on key aspects of the policy following the appointment of former gillnet lobbyist Bruce Buckmaster to Oregon’s Fish & Wildlife Commission. Additionally, the sheer refusal by agency staff to follow through with important policy mandates, including a gill net license buyback program, has helped to cause this frustrating situation.

At this juncture, the Legislature offers anglers and conservationists the best chance to reverse this decision and hold WDFW accountable – particularly as WDFW has requested legislation to increase recreational fishing license fees and reauthorize the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement. Frustrated anglers have been flooding the capitol with calls and emails thus far, and the agency is seemingly in crisis mode.

In response to the criticism, WDFW Director Kelly Susewind issued a press release full of misleading points supporting the Commission’s vote to return gill nets to the lower mainstem Columbia, casting further doubt... continued on page 2
on his ability to implement positive change at WDFW, to support conservation, and to support those who buy recreational fishing licenses.

The recent Commission decision is an affront to the citizens of this state. There are currently 13 ESA-listed salmon and steelhead runs that pass through the lower mainstem Columbia River, and the idea that non-selective gill nets will be deployed in the river again is absolutely mind boggling. The Commission vote in Spokane is a reminder that the objective of removing gill nets will require persistence and the continued support of anglers and concerned citizens.

Contact your elected officials and meet with them one-on-one. Continue to call and email them and ask them to hold WDFW accountable for this latest betrayal to Washington license holders. Renew your CCA membership and find at least one family member, friend, or colleague to join us in the fight against reckless policy decisions. And most importantly... we will never give up. 🐠

What Does This Decision Mean on the Columbia?

Now that the Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission has chosen to cast conservation aside, what does their decision mean for Columbia River salmon management? Below is a comparison chart with the previous management plan versus the plan recommended by an ODFW/WDFW Committee, and adopted by the WDFW Commission in Spokane.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Period</th>
<th>2017-2018 Columbia River Management</th>
<th>ODFW/WDFW Committee Recommendation</th>
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</table>
| Spring            | - No mainstem gill net/tangle net fisheries  
- Record commercial harvest of spring Chinook from off-channel gill net fisheries  
- 80/20 allocation of impacts, actual harvest sharing much closer due to robust off-channel harvests | - NEW Mainstem tangle net fishery before run update  
- NEW Mainstem gill net fishery after run update  
- Robust off-channel gill net harvests, additional smolts from Willamette River hatcheries sent to off-channel gillnet areas  
- 70/30 allocation of impacts (80/20 in 2019, unless run comes in well above forecast) |
| Summer            | - No mainstem gill net fisheries (all mainstem commercial fisheries required to be conducted with selective fishing gears)  
- Strong recent harvests of Chinook in off-channel gill net fisheries during summer  
- Mark-selective recreational fisheries  
- 80/20 sport allocation of Chinook harvest, unused harvest shares passed upstream | - NEW non-selective gill net fishery allowed throughout the mainstem for Chinook  
○ Bycatch of non-target species has been as high as 100% in past years  
- Continued Chinook harvests in off-channel gill net fishery  
- 70/30 allocation of Chinook harvest and allowable impacts to ESA-listed Sockeye |
| Fall              | - Mainstem gill net fishery only in Zones 4-5 (above Lewis River) focused on URB Chinook  
- Allowable Coho tangle net fishery  
- 75/25 (WA) and 70/30 (OR) allocation of impacts for most limiting Chinook stock (Tule/SRW) | - Mainstem gillnetting allowed throughout the Columbia River, rather than limited t.  
- NEW non-selective Coho gill net fisheries, allowable harvest and sale of ESA-listed Coho  
- Coho tangle net fisheries  
- 70/30 allocation of impacts for most limiting Chinook stock (Tule/SRW) |
In late December, President Trump signed The Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Act (S. 3119) into law, bringing relief from excessive sea lion predation to numerous runs of fish in the lower Columbia River and its tributaries. The bill caps a decade-long effort to pass this important legislation, a key priority for Reps. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) and Kurt Schrader (D-OR). Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Jim Risch (R-ID) shepherded the legislation through the U.S. Senate after the House passed the legislation by a strong bipartisan vote, including the support of every House member from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

“We greatly appreciate the tireless efforts of Reps. Herrera Beutler and Schrader to pass this critical legislation – it wouldn’t have happened without their leadership,” said Gary Loomis. “Current law is failing wild and endangered Columbia River basin salmon and steelhead populations, some of which face an imminent risk of extinction if nothing is done to address the unnatural levels of sea lion predation and restore balance to this unique ecosystem. CCA is thankful for the incredible efforts by our members in support of this legislation.”

S. 3119 amends the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to provide Northwest states and Columbia River treaty tribes streamlined authorities to effectively address excessive sea lion predation where we know the problem is most acute, including a large stretch of the river below Bonneville Dam, in the Willamette River, and in other Columbia River tributaries.

“This legislation represents a necessary step to restoring balance to this ecosystem, and we are very excited to have the bill pass both chambers of Congress,” said Ted Venker, director of conservation for CCA National. “Passage of this legislation allows our federal, state and tribal fishery managers to take immediate action to save these fisheries for future generations.”

For years, CCA chapters in Oregon and Washington have been a leading voice in the sportfishing community in support of federal legislation to reduce excessive sea lion predation in the Columbia River basin – rallying their members to contact their lawmakers, organizing public events, securing state funding for interim measures, and orchestrating state legislative hearings. The legislation gained broader support as the dire need for action was reinforced by a recent scientific study which concluded that endangered Willamette River winter steelhead would face a 90% chance of extinction if nothing were done to reduce sea lion predation in the Willamette River.
Wild Fish Conservancy Strikes Again

The Wild Fish Conservancy has threatened another legal attack on steelhead hatcheries, as they filed a 60-day Notification of Intent to Sue WDFW over the operation of a few hatchery summer steelhead programs in Puget Sound. Hatchery summer steelhead programs on the Skykomish, North Fork Stillaguamish and Green River are the main targets of this lawsuit, and the timing of the lawsuit could threaten this year’s smolt releases.

Despite good faith efforts by WDFW and co-managers to develop a local origin summer steelhead stock, WFC moved forward with its latest legal attack on hatchery operations in the Pacific Northwest. Recently, a study on the Clackamas River has found that segregated hatchery steelhead programs (similar to the Puget Sound programs being threatened by WFC) did not negatively impact wild steelhead populations.

State Sponsor Family Grows

We’re excited to welcome Safe Jack, a Washington-based company, to our state sponsor family. We appreciate the support of all our incredible CCA Washington state sponsors. In 2019, that list includes:

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Expanding Outdoor Recreational Opportunity

CCA Members Keith Artz and Mike Lindbo, from our Pierce County chapter, have been representing CCA on the Outdoor Sports and Recreation Council (OSRC). Established less than two years ago, the goal of the OSRC is to support the expansion of outdoor recreational opportunities in Pierce County. As it relates to expanding recreational fishing opportunity, the Council has already helped to improve public access on the Puyallup River.

With the help of Councilwoman Pam Roach, a longtime advocate for outdoor recreational activities, the Council is already working on improving public access, in particular boat launches, in Puget Sound. Thank you to the Pierce County Council, and all of the members of the OSRC, for their commitment to outdoor recreation and for providing a successful, grassroots process for engaging concerned citizens who are making a difference.
Senate Bill 5617 was introduced as a statewide ban and buyback of non-tribal gill nets this January, with over half of the state Senate signed on as co-sponsors. Following hearings in February, the Senate Natural Resources Committee favorably adopted a substitute bill that limited the gill net ban to the Columbia River and promote the use of alternative commercial fishing gears capable of mark-selective harvest.

While it was certainly a positive step to have the revised bill approved by the Committee, the original bill suffered from a lack of united support among all sportfishing and conservation groups in the state, especially in the Puget Sound region. Without a united front from recreational angling groups, passing the bill in its original form was improbable. Unsurprisingly, the bill was also opposed by commercial gill net interests and others who remain unwilling to embrace selective fisheries, despite overwhelming evidence that gillnetting is an outdated and detrimental form of harvest.

The substitute bill, along with the original legislation, would implement a buyback program for gill net licenses, of which there are less than two hundred active permits in Washington state. A gill net license buyback program was an important component of the original Columbia River Gill Net Reforms Policy of 2013 but was never implemented by Washington Department Fish & Wildlife staff. This was despite directives from the Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission to “aggressively pursue” a buyback program.

Following its approval by the Natural Resources Committee, the substitute bill was passed on to the Senate Ways & Means Committee. As time moves on, language in the bill will likely come back into play as the operating budget ins finalized. CCA Washington will continue to advocate for SB 5617, budgeting language, and any other means to remove non-selective gill nets from our waterways. The battle to conserve our fisheries is far from over.

During the early stages of the legislative session, it was refreshing to see such broad support from legislators in the name of common-sense conservation and harvest reform. We ask that you continue reaching out to your legislators, letting them know that non-selective gill nets do not belong in our waters, and that we need real harvest reform to conserve, promote and enhance our fisheries for future generations.
COLD HARD FACTS

CCA WASHINGTON IS PRO-HATCHERY

SINCE OUR FOUNDING IN 2007, NO OTHER SPORT FISHING OR CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN MORE ACTIVE OR SUCCESSFUL IN HELPING TO SECURE FUNDING FOR HATCHERIES IN WASHINGTON STATE.

- In our 12 years of existence, CCA has worked with legislators and budget writers to help in attaining well over $100 million in funding for hatchery infrastructure improvements, production funding, and new hatchery projects across the state.

- Over the past year, CCA’s efforts helped secure $1.6 million in funding to increase chinook salmon production to help aid struggling Orca populations and recreational fisheries in Puget Sound.

- CCA Washington coordinates the King of the Reach Live Capture Broodstock Derby on the Columbia River each year, helping WDFW and Grant PUD to incorporate wild fall chinook into the hatchery gene pool. The result is stronger, healthier hatchery fish and lower potential for negative interactions on the spawning gravel.

- In 2013, CCA Washington worked with other organizations to help secure initial funding to build a state-of-the-art hatchery complex on the lower Deschutes River, which would allow for greater Puget Sound hatchery production capacity.

The King of the Reach Live Capture Broodstock Derby, hosted by the CCA Tri-Cities chapter, improves hatchery production on the Columbia River.

The King of the Reach Live Capture Broodstock Derby, hosted by the CCA Tri-Cities chapter, improves hatchery production on the Columbia River.

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• CCA has worked at the federal level to protect hatchery programs against cynical lawsuits by anti-hatchery organizations. For example, CCA supported efforts of our federal Congressional delegation to secure $3 million in additional funding for the National Marine Fisheries Service to expedite their hatchery permit approval process. Additionally, CCA helped defend against attacks by the Wild Fish Conservancy against all 62 Mitchell Act funded mitigation hatcheries on the Columbia River. CCA is a national organization with a strong presence in Washington D.C.

• Spearheaded a letter sent by 20 Washington State Senators to the heads of the federal National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supporting Mitchell Act funded hatchery programs.

• On the Cowlitz River, CCA Washington helped to secure funding for an additional 2 million fall chinook smolt to be planted annually from net pens on Mayfield Lake.

• CCA Washington worked with fisheries managers and Tacoma Power to revive the summer steelhead recycling program on the Cowlitz River, creating more harvest opportunity for anglers.

• CCA members across the state volunteer at several hatcheries with fin clipping, feeding, kid’s fishing events, and nutrient enhancement programs. Our members truly support their local hatchery programs, both on the ground and in Olympia.

CCA Washington has helped to secure well over $100 million for Washington hatcheries since 2007. This includes facility and production funding.
License Fee Increase on the Way?

This legislative session saw WDFW introduce two pieces of legislation (SB5692/HB1708) which would increase recreational fishing and hunting licenses by 15% ($7 max on anglers) and reauthorize the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement. As is always the case, higher fees and increased taxes are a hot topic! In particular, this Fee Bill has grown in importance with the recent decision by the Commission to reduce recreational fishing opportunity and return non-tribal gill nets to the lower mainstem Columbia River leaving many people asking this important question – why pay more for less?

CCA, along with many other organizations, has been watching the legislation with a keen eye. In a coalition letter sent to legislators in February, CCA and others outlined our common-sense position on the WDFW fee legislation including:

- The need to tie any fee increase to the resolution of key policy issues, including full implementation of the Columbia River gill net reforms as originally planned, increased hatchery production, and greater certainty for Puget Sound recreational salmon fisheries.
- Reforming the Columbia River salmon and steelhead endorsement to focus on implementing the Columbia River fishery reforms and increasing recreational fishing opportunity, rather than back-filling WDFW’s budget.
- We do not support giving WDFW the administrative authority to increase license fees every two years - the legislature should continue to approve all fee increases.

Following the appalling decision to reinstate gillnetting in the lower Columbia, the Fee Bills, which were struggling for legislative sponsors, have both “died” in their respective chambers. However, since these bills would directly affect the state operating budget, the state’s request for a license fee increase, along with the Columbia River Salmon & Steelhead Endorsement renewal, will remain part of the discussion during the budget process which will not be resolved until the final days of this legislative session, scheduled to end on April 28.
Flasher Attracts Attention in More Ways Than One

By Britton Ransford - Mack's Lure

CCA Washington state sponsor Mack’s Lure has added to their extensive line of dodgers and attractors with the ScentFlash UV Triangle Flasher. This one-of-a-kind, 8” in-line spinning flasher features a patented scent release system that is sure to be a game-changer in the salmon, trout and kokanee fishing markets.

“We’re very excited to release yet another innovative product,” Mack’s Lure President Bob Schmidt said. “The ScentFlash has been extensively field tested and is guide-proven to help attract and catch more fish.”

The ScentFlash is very easy to use. Simply un-snap the lid on the flasher, apply scent to the premium pad, and snap back into place. The ScentFlash will then release scent through the water as it rotates, attracting fish with incredible flash and a trail of scent.

“Not only does this 360-degree attractor come in high UV body colors, as well as high UV tapes to attract fish, but it can also be filled up with scent, which is a must-have for today’s angler,” Mack’s Lure Sales Director Bob Loomis said. “You can fill the ScentFlash up with scented oils or gels — or load the cavity with scented tuna, herring or anchovy filets. Whatever your preferred scent is, the ScentFlash will hold it, then disperse it while trolling to catch more fish.”

The ScentFlash is available in two UV body colors — Chartreuse UV and Clear UV — and six UV color patterns to fit your angling needs. This one-of-a-kind in-line spinning flasher will work fantastic for the upcoming springer season when paired with a lure that will create its own action, such as the Mack’s Lure Wiggle Hoochie, a 4.5” skirted spinner featuring a 2.25” Wiggle Hoochie Bill that gives this lure a quick, erratic vibrating action that’ll drive springers crazy.

Alternatively, the ScentFlash can also be trolled off your downrigger ball to leave a trail of scent directly in front of your presentation, while also providing the flash and attraction that will bring fish up to your gear. This is one extremely versatile attractor.

A longtime state sponsor of CCA Washington, Mack’s Lure products will be featured at all of our banquets in 2019.

By Britton Ransford - Mack’s Lure

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Modern Fish Act Sets New Management Precedent

The Modern Fish Act (MFA) was signed into law this past December, setting a new course for recreational fisheries management in America. The MFA will recognize in federal law for the first time that recreational fishing and commercial fishing are fundamentally different activities and therefore should be managed differently to fit the characteristics of each sector.

While recreational fishing is an experience-based activity, commercial fishing is harvest- and profit-based. Currently, the federal government tries to manage recreational anglers using tonnage-based annual catch limits designed for commercial harvest, which is an impractical and ineffective way to measure the catch of America’s 11 million recreational anglers.

The MFA will allow the federal government to apply additional management tools more appropriate for recreational fishing, many of which are already being successfully implemented by state fisheries managers. Ultimately, these changes should help to avoid the sudden closures and drastic fishing regulation changes that have plagued many federally-managed recreational fisheries.

Unfortunately, this bill will not apply to fisheries in the Pacific Northwest. Federal waters off Alaska and the Pacific Northwest are misperceived by legislators as an exclusive domain of commercial fisheries. It is truly unfortunate that our region’s elected officials were, for the most part, adamantly opposed to allowing any fisheries reform bill to move if it might conceivably impact commercial fisheries.

By contrast, in the Southeast region of the United States, where recreational fishing is widely recognized for its conservation, social and economic benefits, there was tremendous political support to address shortcomings in the federal management of recreational fisheries.
Member Photo Spotlight

Check out these great catches by CCA Washington members and supporting guides. Submit your best photos to info@ccawpnw.org to share in the next edition of the Ripple Effect. Chosen submissions will receive a new CCA hat.

Snow day fun! Josh Harrell shows off a nice OP hatchery winter steelhead

Alison Barber escaped the winter weather and tied into this bonefish

A member submitted this image of winter steelhead at Bonneville Dam

Dennis Harman and his granddaughter Devon reel one in

Killian Burris is all smiles as he releases a wild Washington steelhead

Marlin fishing was good for Ashley Comeau on a recent trip to Mexico

Contact Us

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