

NEWS RELEASE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Washington's salmon fisheries set for 2015

ROHNERT PARK, CALIF. – State and tribal co-managers today agreed on a package of salmon fisheries that meets conservation goals for wild salmon populations and provides fishing opportunities on healthy stocks.

Washington's 2015 salmon fishing seasons, developed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and treaty tribal co-managers, were finalized during the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) meeting in Rohnert Park, Calif. The regulations cover salmon fisheries in Puget Sound, Washington's ocean and coastal areas, and the Columbia River.

The first priority for state and tribal fishery managers was to develop a package of salmon fisheries that is consistent with ongoing efforts to protect and rebuild wild salmon stocks, said Ron Warren, fisheries policy lead for WDFW.

While state and tribal fishers will have a variety of salmon-fishing opportunities this year, many fisheries will be constrained to protect wild salmon listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, he said.

“With about 25 percent fewer wild chinook expected back to Puget Sound this year, we had to make several difficult decisions in order to meet conservation goals for wild salmon,” Warren said. “Despite those necessary changes, anglers will still have a number of good opportunities to fish for salmon this year in Washington.”

As in past years, recreational salmon fisheries will vary by area:

Washington's ocean waters: The PFMC approved a recreational chinook catch quota of 64,000 fish, which is an increase of 4,900 fish from 2014's quota. The PFMC, which establishes fishing seasons in ocean waters three to 200 miles off the Pacific coast, also adopted a quota of 150,800 coho for this year's recreational ocean fishery – about 34,000 fish fewer than last year's quota.

Mark-selective fisheries for hatchery chinook will begin in ocean areas on various dates in May.

- The recreational salmon fishing season in marine areas 3 (La Push) and 4 (Neah Bay) will begin with two short openings May 15-16 and May 22-23 for hatchery chinook. The mark-selective fishery for hatchery chinook in those two marine areas will then reopen May 30 and run seven days a week through June 12.

- Mark-selective fisheries for hatchery chinook will be open daily May 30 through June 12 in Marine Area 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores) and Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco).
- In all areas, anglers will have a daily limit of two salmon, but must release coho and wild chinook. The fisheries could close earlier if a coastwide quota of 10,000 hatchery chinook is reached.

Recreational ocean salmon fisheries for chinook and hatchery coho will be open daily beginning June 13 in marine areas 1-4. Anglers will have a daily limit of two salmon, plus two additional pink salmon in marine areas 3 and 4. Those fishing marine areas 1 and 2 also will have a two-salmon daily limit, but can keep only one chinook per day. All four marine areas will close Sept. 30. The La Push late-season area of Marine Area 3 will reopen Oct. 1-11.

Columbia River: The Buoy 10 salmon fishery will be open from Aug. 1 through Dec. 31. The fishery will be open for chinook and hatchery coho Aug. 1 through Sept. 7 (Labor Day) with a daily limit of two salmon, only one of which can be chinook.

From Sept. 8 through Sept. 30, anglers will have a daily limit of two hatchery coho, but must release chinook. From Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, the fishery will be open for chinook and hatchery coho, with a daily limit of two adult salmon. During the season, fishery managers will assess the catch and may make changes to chinook retention.

For the second-straight year, during fall fisheries, anglers fishing from the same boat may continue fishing for salmon until all anglers have reached their daily limits in the following areas:

- The mainstem Columbia River from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line upstream to Lewis River will be open for hatchery coho Aug. 1 through Dec. 31. Anglers will be allowed to retain one adult chinook as part of their two-adult daily limit from Aug. 1 through Sept. 14. From Sept. 8 through Sept. 14, adult chinook retention is restricted to hatchery chinook only. From Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, anglers can retain two adult chinook daily.
- The Lewis River upstream to Steamboat Landing Park dock/Marker #50, near Washougal, will be open Aug. 1 through Dec. 31 for chinook and hatchery coho, with a daily limit of two adult salmon.
- The Steamboat Landing Park dock/Marker #50 upstream to Bonneville Dam will be open Aug. 1 through Dec. 31 for chinook and hatchery coho with a daily limit of three adult salmon, two of which can be hatchery coho.
- Bonneville Dam upstream to the Highway 395 Bridge near Pasco will be open Aug. 1 through Dec. 31 with a daily limit of three adult salmon, two of which may be coho. Anglers must release any unmarked coho caught downstream of the Hood River Bridge.

The summer season on the mainstem Columbia River from the Astoria-Megler Bridge upstream to Bonneville Dam will initially be open from June 16 through July 6 for

hatchery summer chinook and sockeye. The daily limit will be two adult salmonids (chinook and steelhead must be adipose fin-clipped). All sockeye are considered adults in the daily limit. Staff will monitor the fishery and potentially modify the July portion of the fishery, which may include extending the season or allowing retention of any adult chinook.

The summer season from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Highway 395 Bridge will be open from June 16 through July 31 for hatchery summer chinook and sockeye. The daily limit will be two adult salmonids (chinook and steelhead must be adipose fin-clipped). All sockeye are considered adults in the daily limit.

Puget Sound: Anglers will have an opportunity to take advantage of solid returns of coho, pink and Skagit River sockeye salmon. They will, however, see adjustments to hatchery chinook fisheries, due to an expected weaker return of both wild and hatchery chinook than prior years.

“Fishing for pink salmon should be excellent in Puget Sound, including in Hood Canal and Dungeness Bay,” said Ryan Lothrop, Puget Sound recreational fishery manager for WDFW.

Anglers fishing Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) will see the biggest change this season. The area will be closed to chinook retention as part of an effort to rebuild stocks returning to Lake Washington. However, Marine Area 10 will still be open for coho and pink salmon retention.

Neighboring Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) will be open the same dates as last year, with anglers allowed to retain hatchery chinook from July 16 through Aug. 15. However, the area could close sooner if the quota of 2,483 fish is met.

A portion of the estimated 14 million pink salmon returning to Canada's Fraser River will make their way to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the waters of the San Juan Islands. Another roughly 6.5 million pink salmon will return to Puget Sound. Anglers fishing in most marine areas will be allowed to keep two pink salmon in addition to daily catch limits for other salmon during July through September.

Meanwhile, the forecast for sockeye returning to Baker Lake is strong enough to allow for both a lake fishery, open mid-July through early September, and a fishery on the Skagit River, which will be open June 16 through July 15 with a quota.

Other changes to this year's Puget Sound marine area and freshwater fisheries include:

- Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) will remain a non mark-selective fishery for the month of July, when anglers can keep one chinook per day with a two fish limit, plus two additional pink salmon. Also in July, the southern Rosario strait/eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca will be closed for salmon.

- The Dungeness Bay section of Marine Area 6 (Port Angeles) will be open July 16 through Aug. 15 for pink salmon fishing only with gear restrictions. Anglers can keep four pink salmon daily.
- Elliott Bay will be open for pink and coho retention Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays starting Aug. 14.
- Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) north of Ayock Point will be open to coho and pink salmon fishing starting in July with gear restrictions for that month only.
- The mark-selective fishery for hatchery chinook on the Skykomish River is not scheduled to open this year. However, the fishery could open (by emergency rule) if broodstock goals are met.
- Anglers on the Skokomish River should be aware of a new “bobber only” section of the river, from the Highway 106 Bridge to Highway 101. Upstream of Highway 106 will be open in late July for “bobber only” fishing. Additionally, the free-flowing freshwaters near the mouth of the river (below the Tacoma Powerlines) will be closed this year.
- Tahuya River is closed to coho fishing due to several issues including trespassing, littering, and snagging.
- Anglers fishing in Marine Area 5 will be able to retain wild coho for eight days in September, in addition to the entire month of October. Marine Area 7 also will be open for wild coho retention in October.
- Puyallup River will have closures similar to last year, while the Nisqually River will have additional closures.
- Lake Sammamish will be closed to salmon fishing this year.

Specific fishing seasons and regulations for marine areas in Washington and a portion of the Columbia River will be posted on WDFW's North of Falcon website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/northfalcon/> within a few weeks.