

Columbia River Buyback Proviso Update

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Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

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Buyback Proviso

(65) \$14,400,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the department to reduce the number of nontribal commercial gillnet fishing licenses on the Columbia River through a voluntary buy-back program.

(a) Until November 30, 2022, the department may pay up to \$25,000 each for licenses that have been inactive since 2019 and up to \$120,000 each for licenses that have been active since 2019. After November 30, 2022, the department may pay up to \$20,000 each for licenses that have been inactive since 2019 and up to \$96,000 each for licenses that have been active since 2019. It is the intent of the legislature that this will be the last appropriation made to buy back licenses for the Columbia River gillnet fishery.

(b) For all licenses purchased, the department shall calculate the reduced impacts to wild and endangered stocks based on the most recent five-year average of harvest and reserve those impacts for conservation through increased wild salmonid escapement or mark selective fisheries capable of harvesting surplus hatchery-reared salmon where needed to meet federal genetic protection requirements for wild salmon populations in a manner consistent with state-tribal fishery management agreements.

(c) The department must make recommendations to the legislature for any necessary changes in statute, regulations, or program funding levels to transition lower Columbia River mainstem gillnet fisheries to alternative, selective fishing gears, including pound nets or other gears capable of benefitting wild salmon conservation through mark-selective harvest practices. The recommendation must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2022.



Agenda

- Background on Columbia River Buybacks
- Implementation Update
- Next Steps
- Q&A



What is a Buyback?

Also referred to as fleet or license reduction

A tool that state and federal fishery managers have used to address a range of goals:

- Address overcapacity
- Improve economic returns
- Support conservation and management
- Provide fishery disaster relief
- Support fishery transitions and restructuring



History of License Reduction Programs on the Columbia River

1990s	2013	2019–2021	2022
<p>Three federally funded buybacks 1995-1998.</p> <p>Fisheries disaster due to habitat degradation, low returns, ESA listings and harvest restrictions.</p> <p>Retired 40% CR licenses.</p>	<p>CR Policy C-3620 Adopted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reduced mainstem gillnet fisheries,- directed development of select off channel fisheries, and- research alternative gear. <p>Buyback included to mitigate impacts to commercial sector.</p>	<p>2019 – 2021 State funding requests for CR buyback.</p> <p>2020 - CR Policy revised, C-3630 adopted.</p> <p>CR-3630 included direction to work with OR to develop a comprehensive joint-state buyback program.</p>	<p>CR Buyback included in Governor Inslee's Salmon Recovery Strategy \$16.7M.</p> <p>Budget proviso included in final budget for \$14.4M.</p>

Buyback Proviso – subsection a

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Subsection a - Program Structure

Eligibility

- Accessible to all interested license holders
- Eligibility based on license status vs. landings
 - Active – license holders who followed process to renew w/ full fishing privileges in 2019, 2020 or 2021
 - Inactive – license holder who put license in waiver status 2019, 2020 and 2021

Program structure

Round 1 – fixed bid

- Inactive – fixed \$25,000
- Active – price based on interest \$90,835

Round 2 – reverse auction, bids accepted lowest to highest (\$180,000 total)

- Inactive – price set by license holder, max \$20,000
- Active – price set by license holder, max \$90,000



70% Licenses Retired (to date)

	Willapa Bay - Columbia River	Grays Harbor – Columbia River	Total
Beginning # Washington Columbia River Gillnet Licenses (January 2022)	181	59	240
Active licenses retired	113	38	151
Inactive licenses retired	13	5	18
License not renewed in 2022	1		1
Remaining	55	16	70



Subsection a: Implementation Timeline



April

Budget signed

Notice to license holders



May - Nov

Round 1 – outreach, apps sent, received, processed



Jan - April

Round 2 – outreach, apps sent, received, processed



June 30

Funds expire

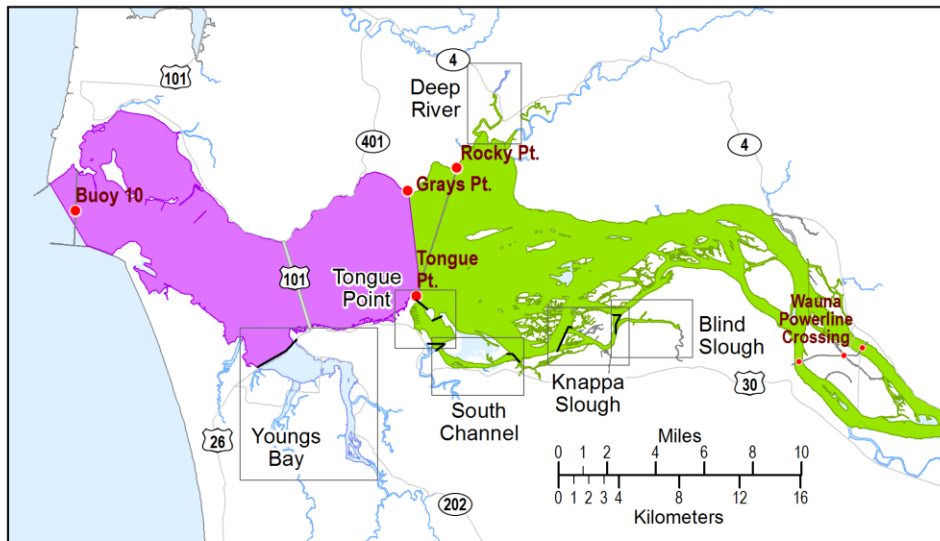
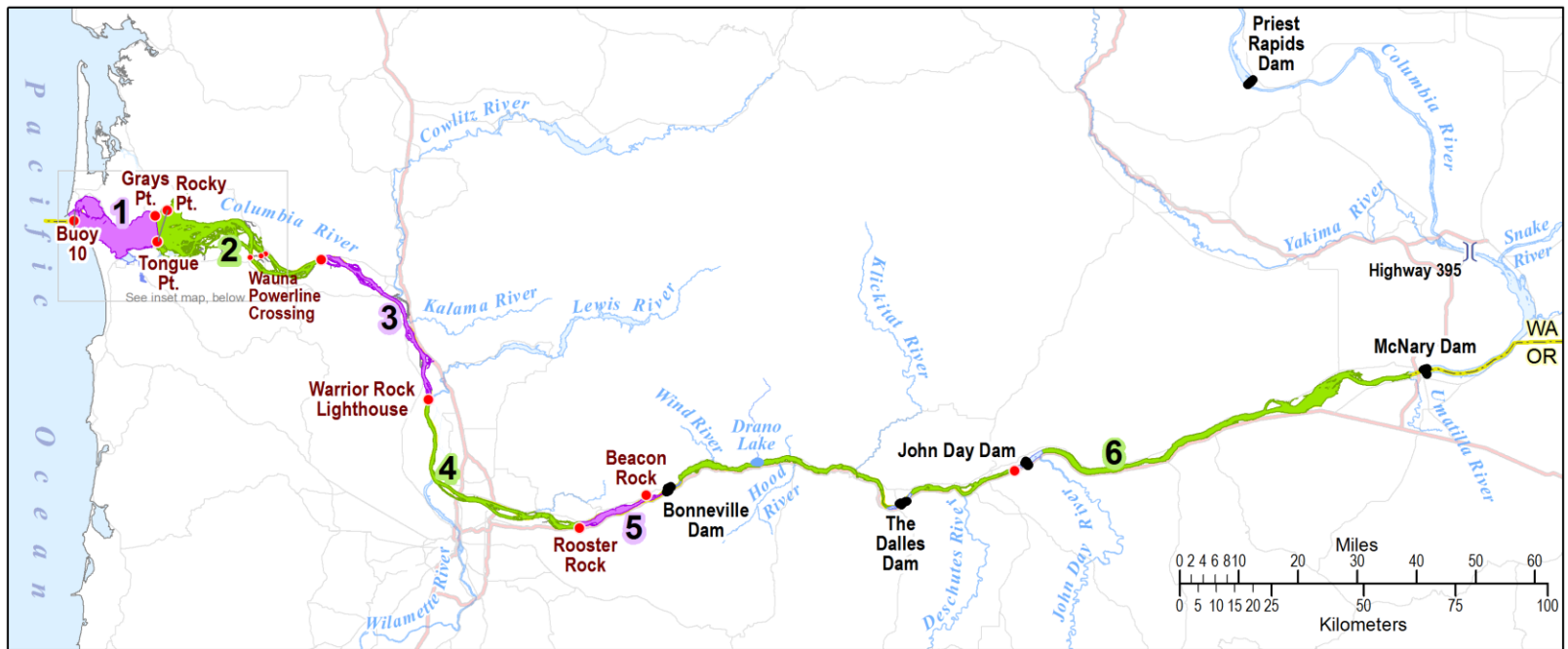
Last checks must be paid



Buyback proviso - subsection b

- (b) For all licenses purchased, the department shall calculate the reduced impacts to wild and endangered stocks based on the most recent five-year average of harvest and reserve those impacts for conservation through increased wild salmonid escapement or mark selective fisheries capable of harvesting surplus hatchery-reared salmon where needed to meet federal genetic protection requirements for wild salmon populations in a manner consistent with state-tribal fishery management agreements.





WDFW Fish Science, 11/23/2021



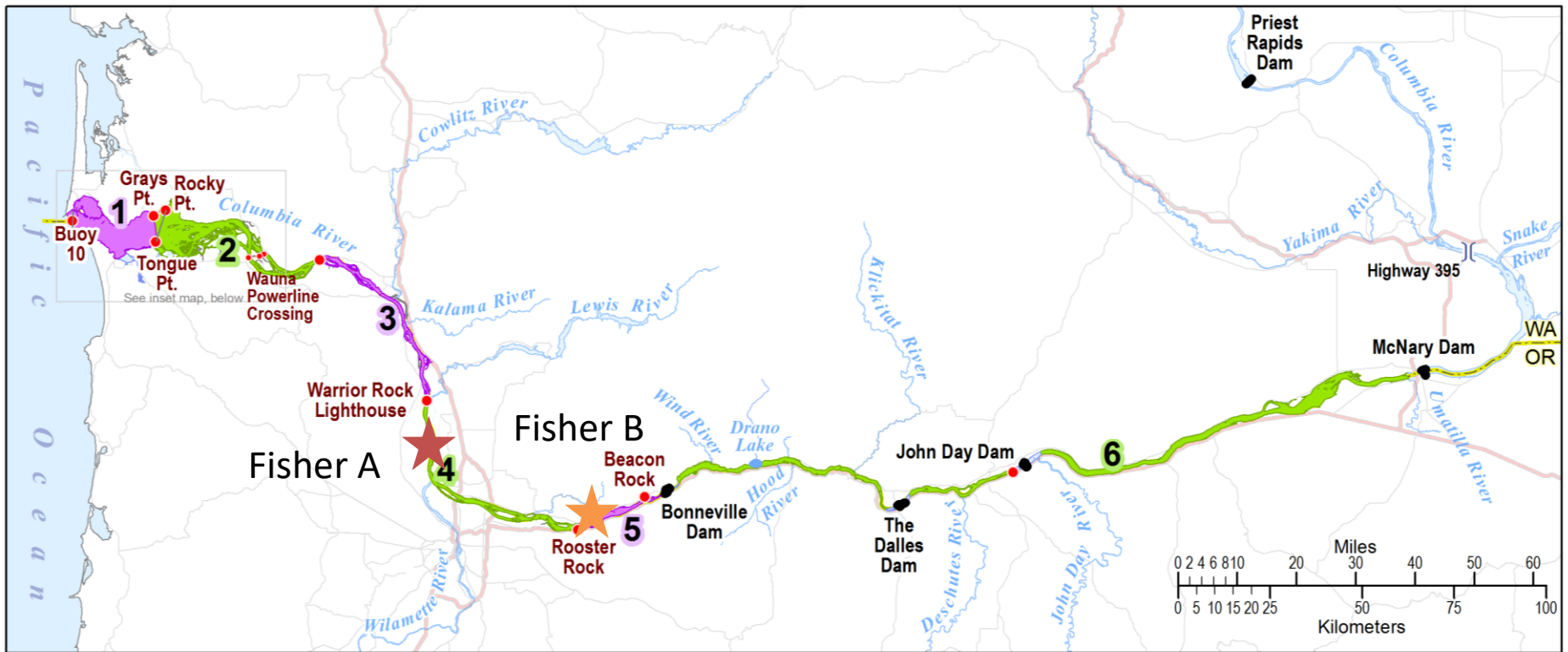
Subsection b – Calculation Approach

Use licenses retired with Columbia River mainstem salmon landings 2017-2021 (fall, no summer/ spring 2017-2021)

Translate individual landings into individual impacts

- No individual license impacts; Impacts calculated for the entire fishery (OR & WA combined)
- Need to convert both states' landings data to common data format
- Different approaches are required for landed catch versus released fish
- Fisher catch/handle varies; cannot assume all fishers use an equal share of the allowable impacts



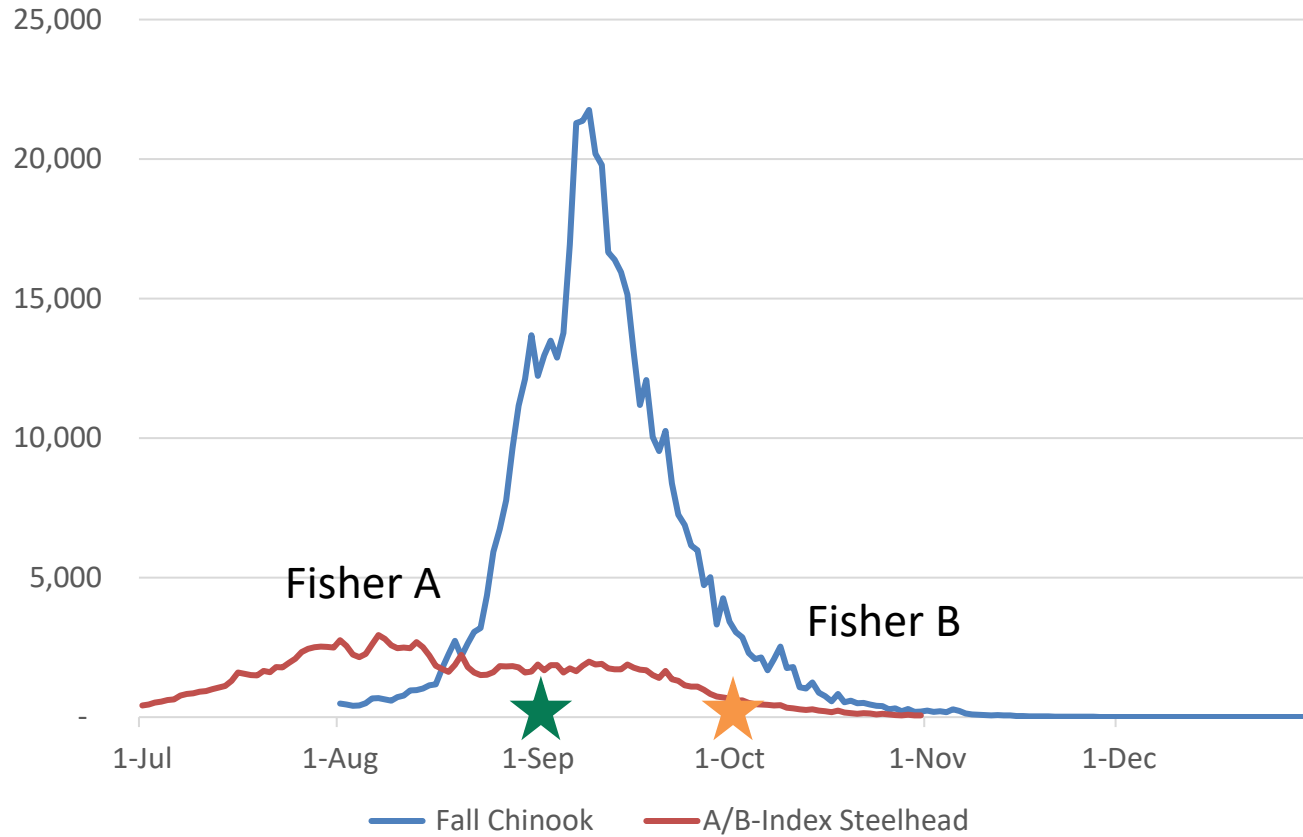


Fisher A and Fisher B could have varied success based on:

- Fish movement
- Location and specific time fished
- Gear configuration
- Weather
- Fishing effort/participation

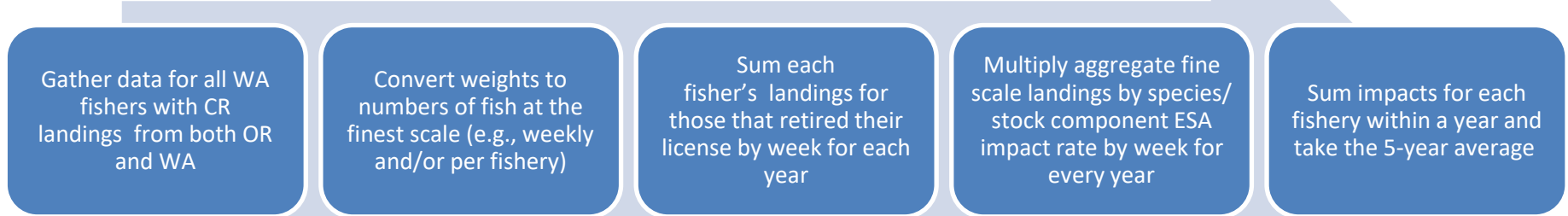


Ten-year average (2012-2021) of adult daily fish counts at Bonneville Dam.

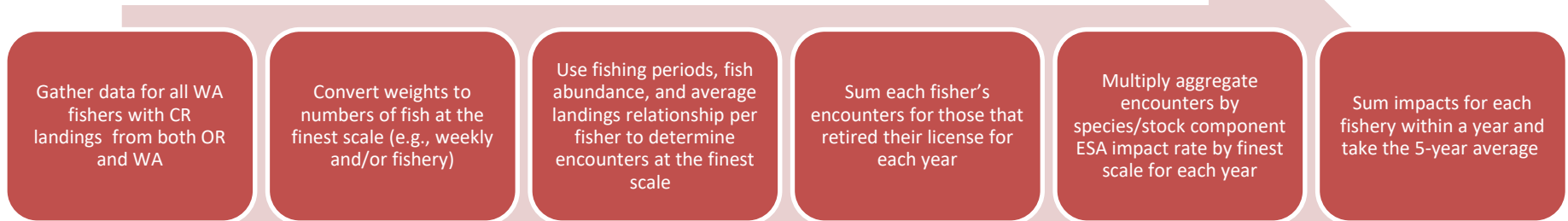


Subsection b – Calculation Approach

For Landed Fish



For Released Fish



Preliminary Fall Season Landings Data for the Columbia River

	Species Landed	Mainstem Landings	Mainstem + Select Area Landings
Total (OR and WA)	Chinook	19,492	33,868
	Coho	4,966	47,353
WA licenses only	Chinook	8,270 (42.5%)	9,976 (29.5%)
	Coho	1,915 (38.6%)	7,633 (16.1%)
Retired WA licenses	Chinook	7,228 (37.1%)	8,315 (24.6%)
	Coho	1,665 (33.5%)	5,610 (11.8%)

1. All data is preliminary and is expressed here as a 5-year average (2017-2021).
2. Landings (#'s of fish) include adults and jacks; ESA impacts are associated with adults only.
3. The landings data included here is aggregated by all fisheries all years and should not be used to estimate associated ESA impacts.
4. Sub b calculation will align with run reconstruction methods according to each individual fishery for each year, for reproducibility and approved methodology by the *US v OR* Biological Assessment



Subsection b – in Practice

“... reserve those impacts for conservation through increased wild salmonid escapement or mark selective fisheries...”



Mark selective fishing is a management strategy

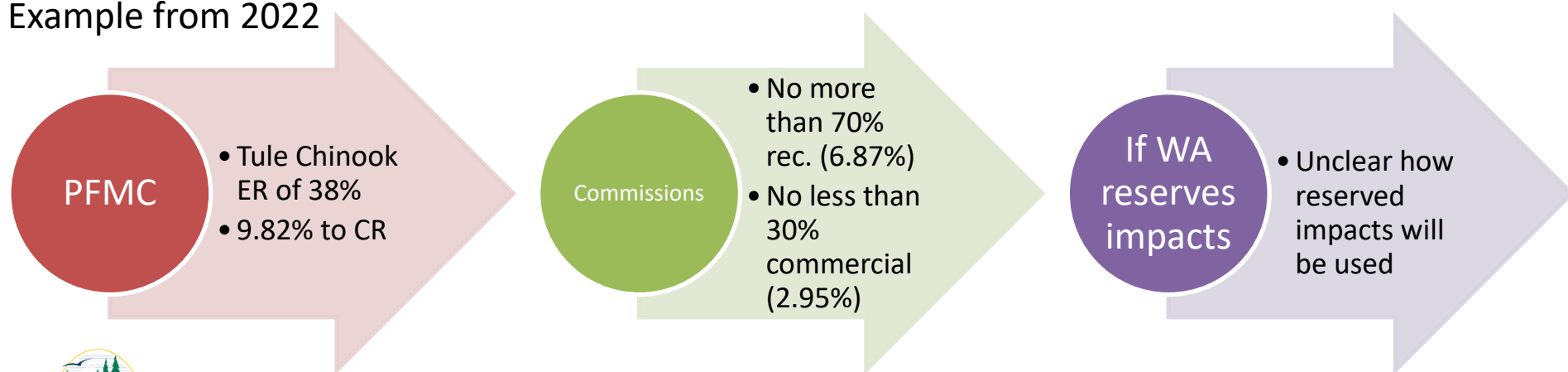


Subsection b – in Practice

“... reserve those impacts for conservation through increased wild salmonid escapement or mark selective fisheries...”

- There are no impacts for Columbia River fisheries set aside solely for the state of WA; impacts are shared with other states and tribes
 - Pre-season planning begins in winter for summer/ fall fisheries
- Without agreement on how to utilize impacts in-river
 - Could result in impacts shifting away from WA fishers to others
 - Flexibility for fishery managers is critical to negotiating concurrency

Example from 2022



Subsection b – Fisheries Management

“...in a manner consistent with state-tribal fishery management agreements.”

SARA/ESA-listing: Sets limits to impacts/mortalities to protected stocks

Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST): Sharing of allowable harvest and escapement targets for salmon stocks between U.S. and Canada

Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC; North of Falcon): Salmon fisheries season setting processes for southern US using public input

U.S. vs. Oregon Management Agreement: Details treaty Indian and non-treaty fishery harvest constraints (e.g., ESA impact rate) for salmon and steelhead stocks destined for areas upstream of Bonneville Dam

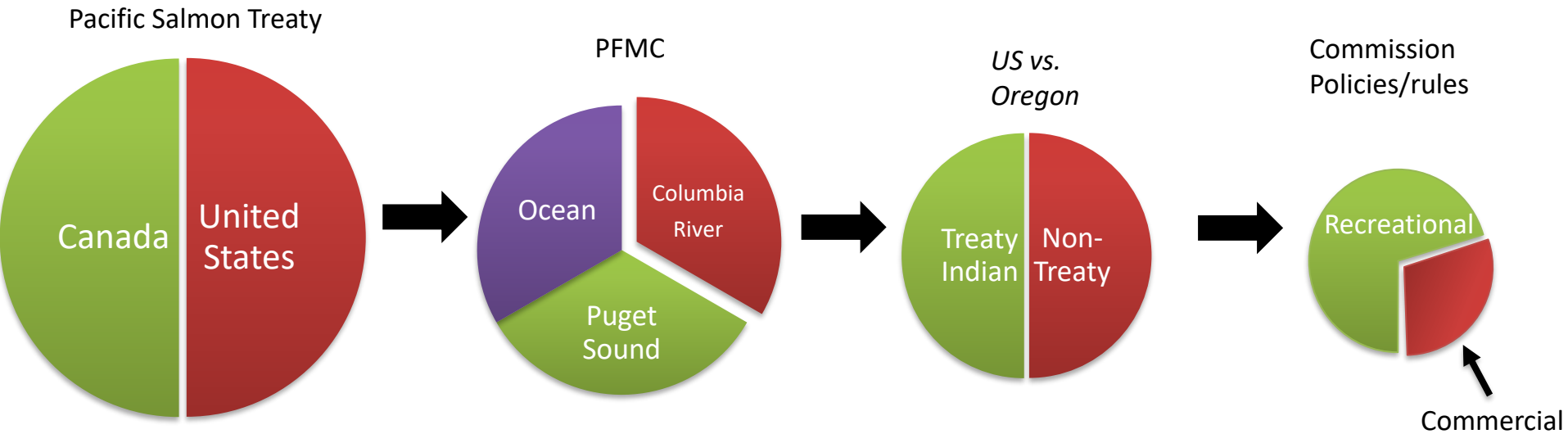
OR and WA Fish and Wildlife Commission Policies: Sector allocation

Compact/Joint State Hearing: Sets fishery rules and makes decisions in-season



Subsection B – Fisheries Management

“...in a manner consistent with state-tribal fishery management agreements.”



* For conceptual purposes only



Total active and inactive licenses with Columbia River landings	96
Active licenses with Columbia River landings	
Total (SAFE and mainstem)	91
Retired	77
Retired: Willapa Bay	61
Retired: Grays Harbor	16
Total remaining	14
Inactive licenses with Columbia River landings	
Total	5
Retired (all Willapa Bay)	3
Total remaining	2



Fall Season Harvest Constraints

“...in a manner consistent with state-tribal fishery management agreements.”

Species	Stock	Stock Component	PST/PFMC	U.S. vs. OR	Commission Policy/OR rule
Fall Chinook	Tule**	Lower River Hatchery (LRH) is surrogate for Lower Columbia River (LCR) natural*	30-41% ER		≤ 70% recreational; ≥ 30% commercial of most constraining fall stock
	Bright**	Upriver Bright (URB) is surrogate for Snake River Wild (SRW)*		1.5-15% non-treaty HR	
Coho	Early/Late	Lower Columbia Natural*	10-30% ER	50% of upriver coho ocean abundance to Bonneville Dam	Prioritize by fishery type
Summer Steelhead	A-index	Wild*		2% non-treaty ER	
	B-index			2% non-treaty ER	
Chum Salmon		Wild*		5% non-treaty HR	No retention/harvest

*ESA-listed stock (Exploitation Rate (ER) and/or Harvest Rate (HR))

** Tule stock has 3 subcomponents; bright stock has 6 subcomponents



Buyback Proviso – subsection c

(c) The department must make recommendations to the legislature for any necessary changes in statute, regulations, or program funding levels to transition lower Columbia River mainstem gillnet fisheries to alternative, selective fishing gears, including pound nets or other gears capable of benefitting wild salmon conservation through mark-selective harvest practices. The recommendation must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2022.

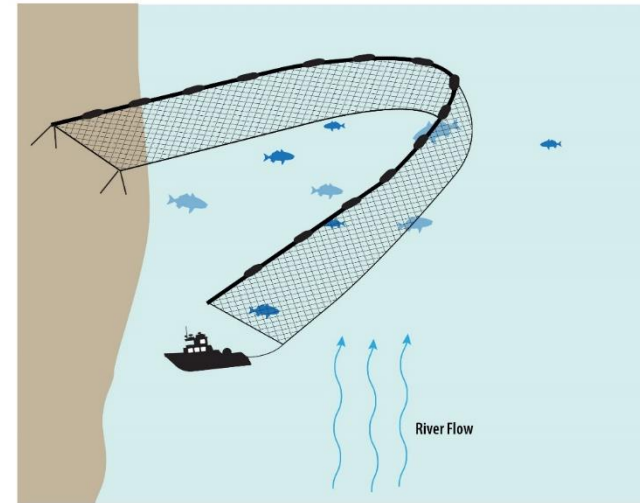


Subsection c – Alternative Gear

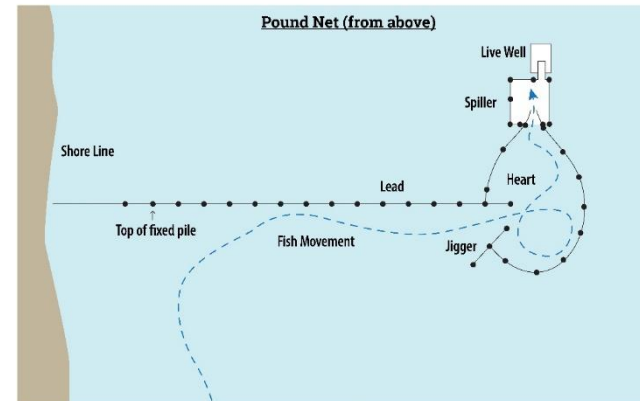
WDFW is using the Emerging Commercial Fishery process established by the legislature to test alternative gear - RCW 77.65.400

- WDFW has completed rulemaking and worked extensively with advisors to establish a path forward for evaluating alt gears
- Many questions remain around economic viability, permitting and licensing structure, and commercial operations
- Successful gears will need to be economically viable; Gillnets are currently the only proven tool for the commercial fishery
 - WDFW recommends continuing with the ECF process

Beach Seine



Pound Net (from above)



Subsection c – Alternative Gear

WDFW needs funding to implement the emerging commercial fishery on the Columbia River

New fishery monitoring	Funding for staff dedicated to observing and collecting samples for this fishery, and to address implementation questions as needed (e.g., utility of steelhead excluders)
Shoring up monitoring tools	Funds to purchase PIT tag array and supplies
Alt gear feasibility	Funds to support work identifying viable fixed gear locations and developing analytical documents for permitting
Gear Fund	Funds to help fishers cover the capital costs associated with new gear/gear optimization



Next Steps

- Complete Round 2 of the buyback program
- Conduct Subsection b calculation, determine potential fisheries outcomes
- Secure funding for required monitoring of the Emerging Commercial Fishery
- Work with Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife to ensure concurrent management of the Columbia River



Resources

- We are continually updating our Columbia River Fisheries and Management webpages with new information:
 - [Columbia River fisheries and management | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)
- You can sign up for our Columbia River Fishery Notices e-mail list serv to receive info. on Compacts and joint state hearings, joint state reports, and action notices regarding fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River:
 - [WDFW mailing lists | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)
- [Selective Fishing on the Columbia River \(wa.gov\)](#):
<https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/02353/wdfw02353.pdf>





Questions?