

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission
PO Box 43200
Olympia, WA 98504-3200

December 10, 2018

Dear Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife Commissioners,

On behalf of the thousands of steelhead anglers represented by the businesses and organizations signing on below, we are writing to respectfully request that the Commission reinstate Selective Gear Rules on the section of the Humptulips River from the Highway 101 Bridge upstream to Donkey Creek.

It is the shared perspective of those represented that there is a unique opportunity with this very diverse group of steelhead anglers, who are sometimes at odds on fish management issues, to take a more conservative approach to managing the Humptulips River steelhead fishery and thus provide a social benefit to the Washington anglers, guides, and local communities as well as a forward-thinking conservation approach for this population of wild steelhead.

For years, the WDFW fishing regulations mandated Selective Gear Rules on the aforementioned section of the Humptulips River from March 1 – March 31, which helped to reduce wild steelhead catch and release mortality and provide sustainable angling opportunities. However, this restriction dropped last year as the result of an effort by the Department to simplify sportfishing rules.

According to the state's records, over the course of the last thirty years the Humptulips has only made escapement approximately 60 percent of the time, which is far from acceptable in the opinion of our groups. Therefore, as a means to be forward thinking in both conservation and from a social perspective we believe the restrictions that were in place and removed, should be re-instated. This will support a common vision and ensure an enhanced level of protection in this portion of the watershed just as others along the coast.

The implications of changing this rule back to what it was will ensure that fishing methods and gear that may have a detrimental impact on wild steelhead are not used at times when these fish are preparing to spawn. While we are aware that this rule change will not solely fully protect and help recover the Humptulips River wild steelhead population, it is one way to relieve pressure on spawning fish and provide an enhanced level of protection.

We are optimistic that WDFW will support the re-instatement of this much needed regulation for the upper Humptulips watershed. WDFW and the Commission have the ability to socially improve the support for steelhead fishing among this diverse group of anglers and at the same time rectify this situation and manage the Humptulips more conservatively for the future. Therefore, we strongly encourage the Commission to act swiftly and reinstate Selective Gear Rules on this stretch of the Humptulips River.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tom Moonan
President
Grays Harbor Sportfishing Coalition

Jonathan Stumpf
Board Chair
Wild Steelhead Coalition

Robert Kratzer
President
Northwest Olympic Peninsula Sportfishing Coalition

Bill Meyer
President
Olympic Peninsula Guide Association

Doug Saint-Denis
President
Northwest Guides & Anglers Association - Washington Chapter