



WILD STEELHEAD COALITION - SPORTFISHING RULE PROPOSALS

6-15-2012

ONLINE TEMPLATE FOR WDFW RULE PROPOSALS:

http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/rule_proposals/myproposal.html

[WSC Proposals submitted between 9:30 and 10:30 PM, 6/14/2012](#)

NO Fishing From a Floating Device (Single rule proposal to be submitted for each river)

Sol Duc River

Proposed Rule:

Fishing from floating devices is not allowed February 1 through November 30 in the Sol Duc River from the Sol Duc Hatchery to the 101 Bridge upstream of the Klahowya Campground. Floating devices may be used for transportation in the area.

Why this change is needed:

This is one of the most important spawning areas for early wild steelhead in the Sol Duc River (McMillan et.al. 2007). Virtually every piece of holding water and spawning riffle is now fished hard and repeatedly by anglers in boats and they catch-and-release (CnR) numerous steelhead during a single day (WDFW creel surveys). Heightened CnR has been shown to have negative consequences on the behavior, reproductive success and survival of many species including adult steelhead (Ashbrook 2010; Hooton 2001, others). This regulation will continue to allow ample sport fishing opportunity from the bank and establish a partial reserve for resting and holding steelhead. WDFW plans to designate this river as a Wild Steelhead Management Zone to protect steelhead genetics while allowing sport fishing. Reduced angling encounters will improve wild steelhead survival and spawning, help rebuild the early-timed run now depleted, and improve their range of genetic and adaptive diversity.

Public or Agency Involvement:

The Wild Fish Conservancy - Trent Donohue and Nick Gayeski
Native Fish Society - Mike Moody
Bill McMillan, Biologist and Outdoor writer
John McMillan, Fish Research Scientist
Wild Salmon Center - Devona Ensmenger
Conservation Angler - Pete Soverel



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Mike Gross, WDFW Fishery Biologist

Calawah River

Proposed rule:

Fishing from floating devices is not allowed February 1 through November 30 in the Calawah River from the Highway 101 Bridge upstream to the confluence of the North and South Forks.

Why this change is needed:

This is the most important spawning area for mid and late winter run wild steelhead in the Calawah River (McMillan et.al. 2007). Early run wild steelhead rest and slowly pass through this area during the early winter months or stage for a month or more before beginning to spawn sometime in late February with high levels of spawning in early-to-mid-March.. Boats can access every possible resting, holding and spawning lie in the entire river, while bank anglers have less access to challenging lies. Wild steelhead are caught-and-released (CnR) in large numbers, often while in their spawning phase. Repeated and high levels of CnR can negatively influence behavior, reproduction, and survival of many fish species, including steelhead. This proposal will provide a partial refuge, increasing chances for steelhead survival and effective spawning. Over time this regulation should increase wild steelhead abundance and diversity, improving their health and the fishery for future generations.

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Hoh River



Proposed rule:

Fishing from floating devices is not allowed February 1 through November 30 in the Hoh River from the Morgan's Crossing to the Olympic National Park.

Why this change is needed:

This is an important spawning area for mid and late run wild steelhead in the Hoh River. Wild early run and South Fork steelhead rest and slowly pass through this area during the early winter months and spawn in upriver areas. By early March, later run steelhead have begun spawning in the area in good numbers, continuing throughout the spring. Boats can access every possible holding and spawning lie in the entire river, while bank anglers have less access to challenging lies. Wild steelhead are caught-and-released (CnR) in large numbers, often while in their spawning phase. Repeated and high levels of CnR can negatively influence behavior, reproduction, and survival of wild steelhead (Ashbrook 2010; Hooton, 2001; others). This proposal will provide a partial refuge, increasing chances for steelhead survival and effective spawning. Over time this regulation should increase wild steelhead abundance and diversity, improving their health and the fishery for future generations.

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Bogachiel River

Proposed rule:

Fishing from floating devices is not allowed February 1 through November 30 in the Bogachiel River from the 101 Bridge to the Olympic National Park.

Why this change is needed:

This is an important spawning area for mid-to late-run wild steelhead in the Bogachiel River. Wild early run and many of the later run steelhead rest and slowly pass through this area and spawn in upriver



areas. By early March the later run winter steelhead have begun spawning in the area in good numbers, continuing throughout the spring. Boats can access every possible resting, holding and spawning lie in the area, while bank anglers have less access to challenging lies. Wild steelhead are caught-and-released (CnR) in large numbers, often while in their spawning phase. Repeated and high levels of CnR can negatively influence behavior, reproduction, and survival of wild steelhead (Hooton, 2001, and others). This proposal will provide a partial refuge, increasing chances for steelhead survival and effective spawning. Over time this regulation should increase wild steelhead abundance and diversity, improving their health and the fishery for future generations.

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Klickitat River

Proposed rule:

Fishing from floating devices is not allowed from September 15 through June 30 on the Klickitat River from the Little Klickitat River confluence to the Yakima reservation.

Why this change is needed:

This is one of the two major spawning areas used by wild steelhead in the Klickitat River. Wild summer run steelhead arrive, hold and some slowly pass through this area during the summer and fall months; the other half of the run hold here and spawn the following spring. Fishing effort has grown very significantly on the Klickitat River in recent years. Virtually every resting and hiding niche and spawning riffle in this area can be easily reached and fished hard and repeatedly through the use of boats. Wild steelhead are caught-and-released (CnR) in large numbers. Repeated and high levels of CnR can negatively influence behavior, reproduction, and survival of wild steelhead (Ashbrook 2010; Hooton 2001, others). This proposal will provide a partial refuge, increasing chances for steelhead survival and effective spawning. Over time this regulation should increase wild steelhead abundance and diversity, improving their health and the sport fishery for future generations.



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Catch and Release fishing only for wild steelhead statewide

Rule proposal details:

Change the present rule(s) that allow wild steelhead retention February 16 to April 30 to no retention at any time with no exceptions.

Proposed rule:

No wild steelhead may be retained at any time. No exceptions.

Why this change is needed:

Of the seven wild steelhead DSP's in Washington, five are now ESA listed and the other two are in long term decline. In the 1950's, 100 plus streams produced good harvests (WDG 1950's), but today only 9 rivers make the WDFW modeled spawner escapements and can be open to limited harvest. The Wild Steelhead Coalition recommends the state manage in a more conservative manner to assure these few remaining populations are not depleted. CnR fishing is the rule in all rivers in British Columbia and it is well respected by the sport fishing community. This rule will prevent further erosion of Washington wild populations and help rebuild their runs to the higher abundances documented in recent history (McMillan 2006; Gayeski 2012). We need to recognize that the Olympic Peninsula Rivers are the only waters where wild steelhead fisheries can now occur; that steelhead are highly vulnerable to CnR impacts, and if these stocks become depleted, fishing will end for wild steelhead in Washington.

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Selective Gear Rules Only

Proposed Rule:

Selective Gear Rules

Westside Rivers - Trout and Steelhead - February 1 to April 30.

Eastside Rivers - Trout and Steelhead – Year Round

Why this change is needed:

Catch and release mortality can vary widely depending the gear type used. Hooten (2001) found that hooking mortality was consistently at least 3 to 9 times higher when using bait verses using artificial lure or fly. Bruesewitz (1995) found that the highest percentage (17. 8%) of critical area hookings (tongue, esophagus, gills, and eyes) occurred when using bait and treble hooks in winter steelhead fisheries. Because steelhead and stream-resident rainbow trout are the same species, inter-spawn, and both can produce anadromous forms, it is important to consider wild rainbow trout conservation when managing for wild steelhead sustainability and recovery. Many studies have shown significantly higher mortality in trout when angling with bait verses artificial lures/flyes (Taylor and White 1992; Schill and Scarpella 1995; Mongillo 1984; Wydoski 1977; Schisler and Bergersen 1996). Taylor and White (1992) showed an average mortality of trout to be 6-8 times greater when using bait verses using lures or flies, respectively. Selective gear rules are necessary to minimize the mortality impacts on wild steelhead populations (including many ESA listed stocks).

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Barbless Hooks Only – December 1 to August 31

Rule Proposal Details:

Statewide Freshwater Rules > Tackle > “Hook and line angling only. Barbed or barbless hooks may be used, and a hook may be single-point, double, or treble, but not more than one line with up to three hooks per angler may be used.”

Proposed Rule:

Statewide Freshwater Rules > Tackle > “Hook and line angling only. Only barbless hooks may be used, and a hook may be single-point or double point but not more than one line with up to two hooks per angler may be used.”

Why This Change Is Needed:

The barbless hooks only rule has been adopted as a conservation effort in many areas including many OR rivers, parts of CA and ID, and Canada including all of British Columbia. Hunt (1970) found that fishing seasons and daily bag limits, when used by themselves, are not effective management tools, because they do not apply to each fish that is captured. Hooten (1987) found catch and release mortality of adult winter steelhead to be 2.5 times greater when using barbed hooks compared to barbless hooks. The use of barbless hooks reduces handling time and stress on hooked fish and adds to survival after release (Wydoski 1977). The extremely valuable juvenile steelhead, rearing for 1-3 years in freshwater, are often regularly exposed to mortality in fisheries targeting trout and adult salmon and steelhead. Compared with using barbless hooks, using barbed hooks has been proven to increase tissue damage, handling time, exposure to air, and can significantly reduce smolt numbers and adult returns. Compelling evidence shows that catch and release mortality of juvenile and adult salmon and steelhead can be greatly reduced by using barbless hooks.

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Mandatory Hatchery Steelhead Retention

Rule Proposal Details:

TROUT First Sat. in June- End of Specific Season Min. size 14". Daily limit 2. Selective gear rules
All Game Fish First Sat. in June-End of Specific Season Catch-and-release except up to 2 hatchery STEELHEAD may be retained.

All Game Fish First Sat. in June-Oct. 31 Statewide min. size/daily limit. Selective gear rules.
Change voluntary retention of hatchery steelhead to mandatory retention of hatchery steelhead.

Proposed Rule:

Mandatory Retention of all hatchery steelhead - Statewide

Why Is This Change Needed:

Unharvested Puget Sound hatchery steelhead create a negative impact to wild steelhead populations when allowed to spawn in the wild. This is a critical conservation measure to reduce the overall impact of hatchery steelhead on wild steelhead populations through the required retention of hatchery fish. Hatchery steelhead stray far worse than wild steelhead and often spawn in rivers on non origin. Hatchery steelhead have lost most of their productivity (Araki et.al. 2008) but do spawn with wild steelhead and reduce the overall rivers production. Hatchery steelhead also spawn together and their fry compete with wild fry for food and space (Kostow 2009). The state steelhead management plan describes the need to increase the harvest rates on hatchery-origin fish. This regulation is already in place during steelhead fisheries in the upper Columbia and its tributaries that provide both angling opportunity while reducing impacts to recovering ESA listed steelhead.

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Rainbow Trout Catch and Release Only & Selective Gear Only

Rule proposal detail:

This proposal changes the rule allowing the harvest for rainbow trout in some Puget Sound anadromous rivers areas and the type of gear that may be used.

Proposed rule:

All resident steelhead (rainbow trout) must be immediately released when fishing in The Puget Sound Steelhead ESA listed rivers and in Wild Steelhead Management Zones. Selective gear is required when fishing for all trout species in these rivers to prevent excess impacts to resident steelhead.

Why this change is needed:

Wild steelhead In Puget Sound Rivers are ESA listed as threatened and resident steelhead (rainbow trout) can play an important role in the recovery and rebuilding of the wild anadromous populations. Resident steelhead and are important in the mating, gene flow, productivity and overall stock health and viability of wild anadromous steelhead (Christie, 2012; McMillan, 2007). Recent research has shown that 20% to 40% of returning anadromous steelhead have at least one resident parent and many have two. Each form (resident and anadromous) is dependent on the other for continued survival and recovery from adverse conditions. Fishing for resident steelhead at a 14" size limit removes many valuable spawners and inflicts a high CnR mortality rate on juvenile anadromous and resident steelhead which can exceed 30%. Conserving resident steelhead will shorten the time necessary for Puget Sound wild steelhead to recover and improve their stock size, genetic diversity and health.

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Whitefish Fishery Only Open During Steelhead Season on Klickitat and Wenatchee Rivers

Rule Proposal Details:

From boundary markers above Klickitat Salmon Hatchery upstream
WHITEFISH Dec. 1-Mar. 31 No min. size. Daily limit 15 WHITEFISH only. Whitefish gear rules.

Proposed Rule:

Whitefish angling only open during Steelhead Season on the Klickitat and Wenatchee Rivers

Why Is This Change Needed:

The Klickitat whitefish season coincides with wild steelhead spawn timing and distribution creating a critical conservation need to protect naturally spawning and staging steelhead. Extensive monitoring by the Yakima Tribe and WDFW has resulted in empirical data showing the majority of wild steelhead spawning takes place within this rule proposal location and timing. Anglers on the Yakima have knowingly targeted steelhead under whitefish seasons and guides and anglers have been cited for poaching and illegally targeting steelhead during the whitefish season on the Klickitat. While some anglers enjoy targeting whitefish, other anglers use the open whitefish season to target steelhead in the Klickitat during the winter and early spring months. Furthermore, incidentally catching and releasing steelhead on whitefish gear may increase C&R mortality by landing steelhead on inappropriate tackle.

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Skagit River Wild Steelhead Management Zone (entire River)

Rule proposal detail:

There are no rules presently specified in the regulations for Wild Steelhead Management Zones.

Proposed rule:

Designate the entire Skagit River watershed as a Wild Steelhead Management Zone and manage for improving stock abundance, diversity and recovery.

Why this change is needed:

This designation will allow ESA listed Skagit River steelhead stocks to recover genetic diversity and a spawning abundance above the WDFW spawner escapement goal. Hatchery steelhead lose 35% productivity each generation (Araki et al. 2008) and returning hatchery adults produce smolts that compete with wild smolts (Kostow 2009). Recent studies show that steelhead stocks recover rapidly when hatchery impacts are removed (Wind, Asotin, Clackamas Rivers). Genetic studies of Skagit steelhead show a significant portion of the spawning population is composed of hatchery fish (Pflug 2012). Models (Chilcote 2012) show moderate levels of hatchery introgression and competition with wild fish greatly reduces wild stock productivity. Removing hatchery fish, recovering the early wild run, protecting resident steelhead (rainbow trout) (Christie, 2012) and increasing the number of repeat spawners will recover Skagit stocks above the needed spawner escapements in a few generations.

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