



July 9, 2010

Mr. Phil Anderson, Director  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
600 Capitol Way North  
Olympia, WA 98501

Director Anderson:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with our organizations recently to discuss possible legislative revisions to RCW 77.105, Recreational Salmon and Marine Fish Enhancement Program (RSMFEP), so that it more directly addresses the enhancement of angling in Puget Sound. You requested that we provide you some suggestions of under-utilized approaches to increase angling opportunity. We have provided a number of alternatives for your consideration and would also like to reiterate our support for specific goals in the revised legislation based upon increases in angler participation.

Angler days are the basic units utilized by economists to evaluate recreational activity and trends in angler participation are the best existing measures of attraction to the fishery. During the late 1970s the number of salmon angler days on Puget Sound peaked at over 1.5 million per year. Although the region's population has nearly doubled since then, angler days on Puget Sound have dwindled to less than a third of their former level. We are confident, however, that there are a number of common-sense actions the Department can take to address the decline.

Focusing the RSMFEP on increasing angler participation is consistent with the recent State Auditor's recommendation that the revised goals of the program should be modified to include "outcome oriented goals". Nothing appears more consistent with this, and relevant, than targeting higher levels of angler participation.

Angler trip goals accommodate a broad spectrum of approaches to achievement. We can achieve the goal of increased Puget Sound angler participation with a broad spectrum of techniques:

- Utilize more fully the thousands of excess hatchery Chinook and Coho (not needed for conservation) that are not currently being caught by non-tribal fishers.
- Increase the level of mark selective angling.
- Gain a better understanding of current recreational hooking mortality rates and consider possible methods to achieve further reductions.

- Review the plethora of data regarding hatchery contribution rates to the Puget Sound recreational fishery with the intention of increasing production in the most promising facilities and/or techniques.
- Consider more liberal angling regulations (For example, size limit reductions on hatchery Chinook, two rods per angler during September to target hatchery Coho, etc.).
- Evaluate new artificial rearing techniques intended to increase contribution rates to the fishery.
- Consider “new” add-on fisheries that are highly selective and have low mortality rates.
- Outreach: Develop seminars and other public “how to” information regarding local angling opportunities (Various local experts could be engaged in this program. For example, some time ago an Olympia angler developed an innovative method of catching chum salmon in saltwater that could be applied elsewhere. Similarly, during the 1960s innovation and communication on the part of the Washington Department of Fisheries resulted in a recreational fishery capable of harvesting excess Lake Washington Sockeye returns. A similar potential exists with other stocks.).

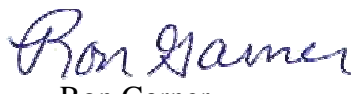
By building outcome based goals directly into the RSMFEP, the program will make an important contribution to improved and increased angling opportunities in Puget Sound. In turn, it will enhance and conserve the region’s fish populations and raise our quality of life in the Puget Sound. We also know the program -- and recreational license sales in general -- is an important source of revenue for the Department as state General Fund support has significantly declined in recent years. As we succeed in increasing angler participation this revenue is also likely to increase.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and don’t hesitate to contact us if we can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,



Andy Marks  
Vice-Chair, Government Relations  
CCA Washington



Ron Garner  
State Board President  
Puget Sound Anglers



Dwight Jones  
President  
Fish Northwest

Cc: Fish and Wildlife Commission