

WDFW Accepting Comments on 2011-12 Sportfishing Rule Proposals

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is accepting public comments through Oct. 2 on state sportfishing rules proposed for 2011-12. The 17 rule proposals, which would affect various recreational fisheries around the state, are available on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/rule_proposals/. Printed copies of the proposals are available by contacting WDFW's Fish Program at (360) 902-2700. As a cost-saving measure, WDFW last year changed the process for considering sportfishing rule proposals to a two-year cycle, rather than a yearly basis. The next opportunity to propose major changes to sportfishing rules will be next year for the 2012-14 season, said Craig Burley, fish management division manager for WDFW.

But because of conservation concerns for smelt and the need for several minor adjustments to fisheries, WDFW is proposing a small number of changes for 2011-12, Burley said. Sportfishing rules currently under consideration include: Closing recreational fishing in fresh and saltwater statewide for Columbia River smelt, which are listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Recreational fishing for smelt — also known as eulachon — is already closed on the Columbia River and its tributaries. However, further protection is needed because Columbia River smelt are found in other river systems. Re-opening fisheries for game fish on the Black River and its tributaries, the Upper Nisqually and South Fork Stillaguamish rivers and on Minter and Purdy creeks. The fisheries were inadvertently included in a package of stream closures earlier this year. Removing Riffe Lake from the list of waters where a Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement is required. Comments on the proposals can be submitted by mail to WDFW Rules Coordinator Lori Preuss at Lori.Preuss@dfw.wa.gov or 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA, 98501. In addition, the public will have an opportunity to provide testimony and written comments on the proposed rule changes during the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission's Oct. 1-2 meeting in Olympia. Check the commission's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/> for the specific day and time. The commission, which sets policy for WDFW, is scheduled to take action on the final sportfishing rules package during its Dec. 2-4 meeting in Olympia.