

WDFW Schedules Public Meetings on Sportfishing Rules

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will accept public comments through Dec. 15 on proposed changes to the state's sportfishing rules. As part of that effort, WDFW has scheduled six public meetings in October to discuss with the public the proposed rules, which would affect various fisheries around the state. To review and comment on the proposed rules visit WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/rule_proposals/. Printed copies of the proposals and comment forms are available by contacting WDFW's Fish Program at (360) 902-2672. The website includes information on proposed rules that WDFW fishery managers recommend move forward for further review and public comment, as well as information on proposals not recommended for further consideration. Craig Burley, fish management division manager for WDFW, said people can submit comments by using a new online form available on the website. "The ability to submit comments through the website is one of several changes we have made to the process to make it more user-friendly," Burley said.

The public meetings will run from 6-8 p.m. and are scheduled for: Oct. 1 - WDFW's Spokane Office, 2315 North Discovery Place, Spokane Valley. Oct. 2 - WDFW's Ephrata Office, 1550 Alder Street NW, Ephrata. Oct. 4 - WDFW's Mill Creek Office, 16018 Mill Creek Blvd., Mill Creek. Oct. 9 - WDFW's Vancouver Office, 2108 Grand Blvd., Vancouver, Wash. Oct. 10 - Montesano City Hall, 112 North Main Street, Montesano. Oct. 11 - East Valley Fire Station, 2003 Beaudry Road, Yakima. The public also will have an opportunity to provide testimony on the proposed rule changes during the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission's January meeting in Olympia. Check the commission's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/commission/>) for the specific day and time. The commission, which sets policy for WDFW, is scheduled to vote on the final sportfishing rules package during a meeting in February. WDFW is recommending nearly 70 sportfishing rules proposals move forward for public comment, including proposals that would: Change the opening day of more than 100 resident trout streams to the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. Allow the use of two fishing poles, with the purchase of a two-pole endorsement, on 50 additional lakes throughout the state. Remove the daily catch limit for channel catfish and the daily catch and size limits for bass and walleye in portions of the Columbia and Snake rivers and their tributaries to assist with recovery efforts for salmon and steelhead. A second option under that proposal would also remove existing limits for those fish, but restrict anglers to three bass larger than 15 inches in length and one walleye larger than 24 inches in length. The proposed changes are designed to increase the harvest of abundant bass, walleye and channel catfish, which prey on juvenile salmon and steelhead that are listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Prohibit the retention of cabezon measuring less than 18 inches in length in marine areas 4-11 and 13 to provide additional protection for the species. The minimum size limit would allow the fish to mature and spawn before they can be legally harvested. Increase catch limits for walleye on Lake Roosevelt and the Spokane Arm of Lake Roosevelt, where there is an overabundance of the species. The proposed change is designed to allow a variety of other fish species to grow in numbers by reducing the walleye population through an increase in recreational fishing opportunities.