

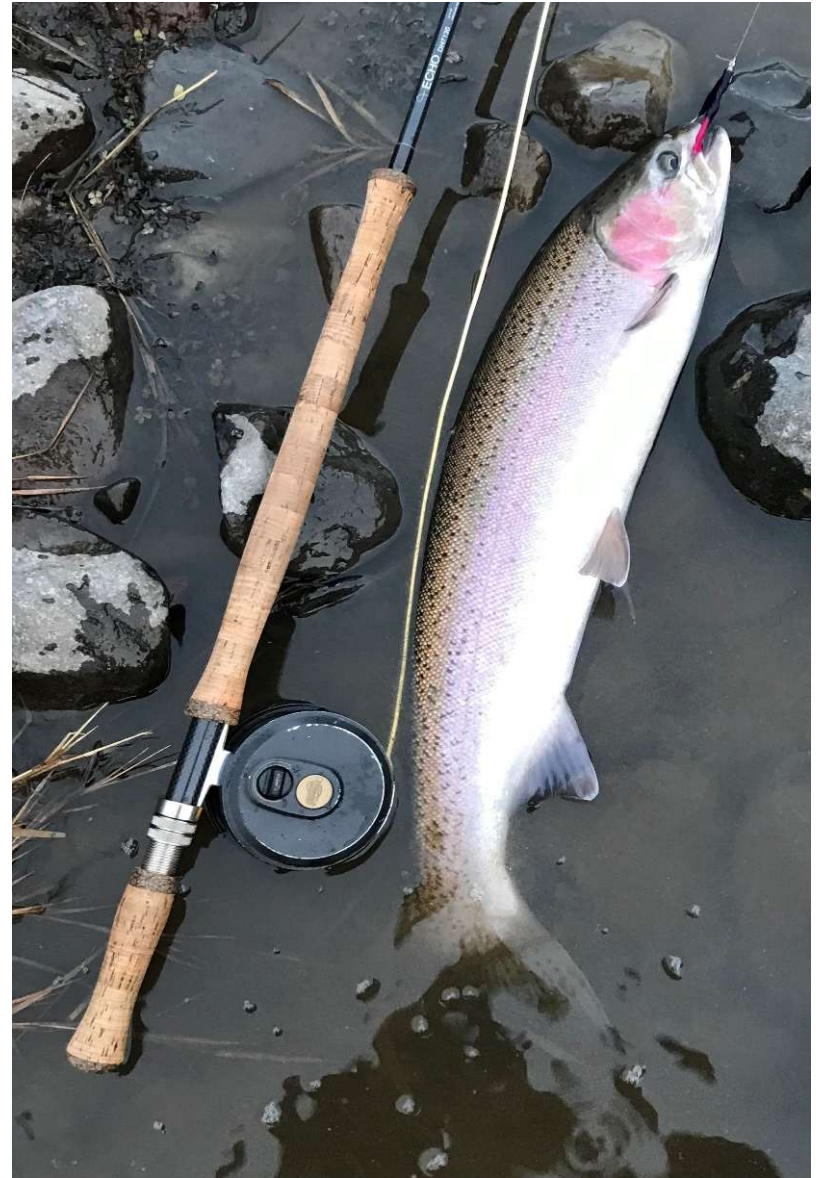
# Summer Steelhead Management in the Columbia River Basin – A Washington Perspective

Chris Donley, Region 1 Fish Program Manager



# Outline

- Management framework
- Fishery considerations and development
- Fishery, 2025 example and in-season management



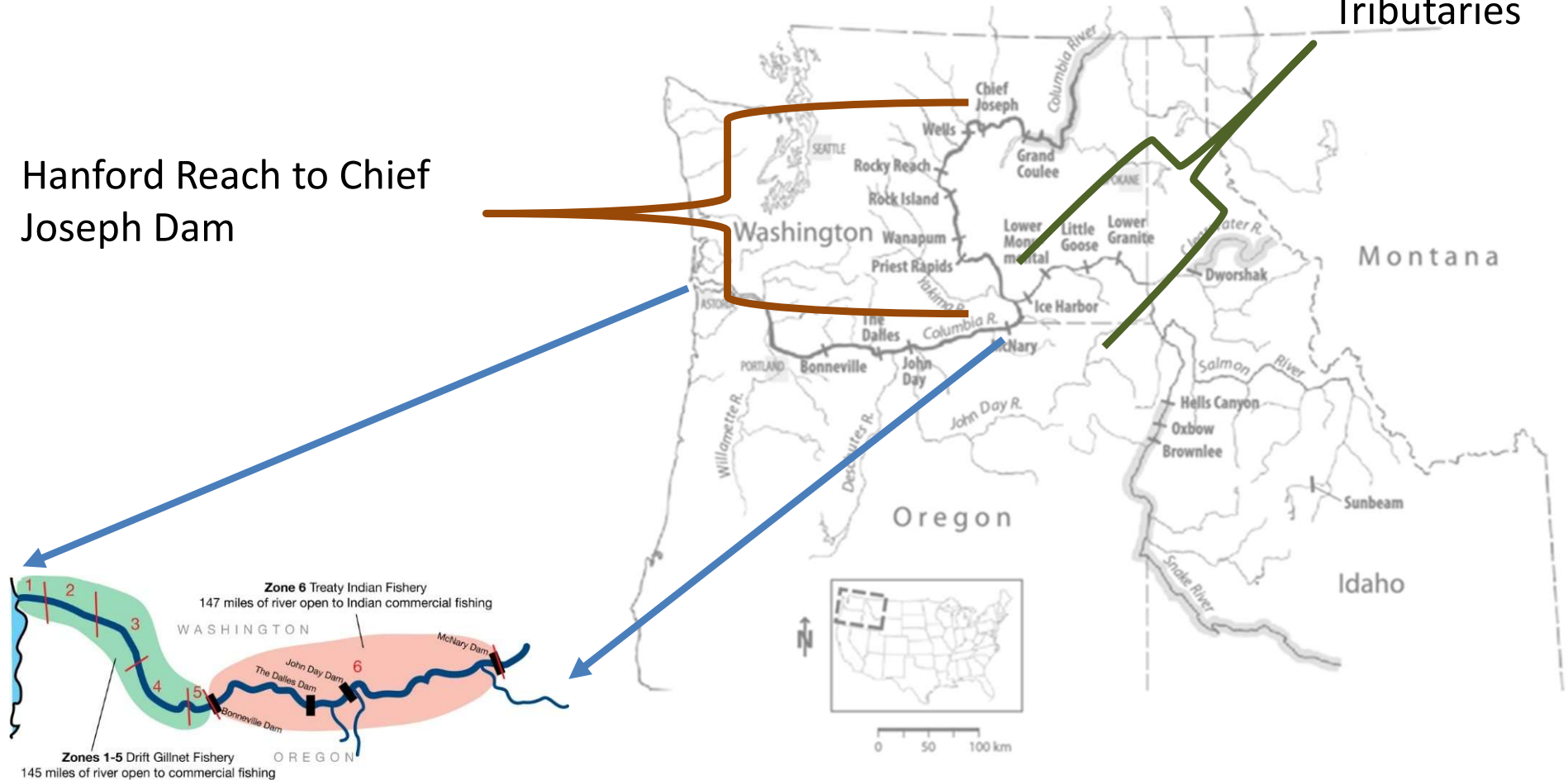


# Management Framework

# Management Framework

Hanford Reach to Chief Joseph Dam

Snake and Tributaries



Buoy 10 to Highway 395 at Pasco, WA (primarily Zones 1-6)

Images courtesy of CRITFC and Ferguson et al. 2010



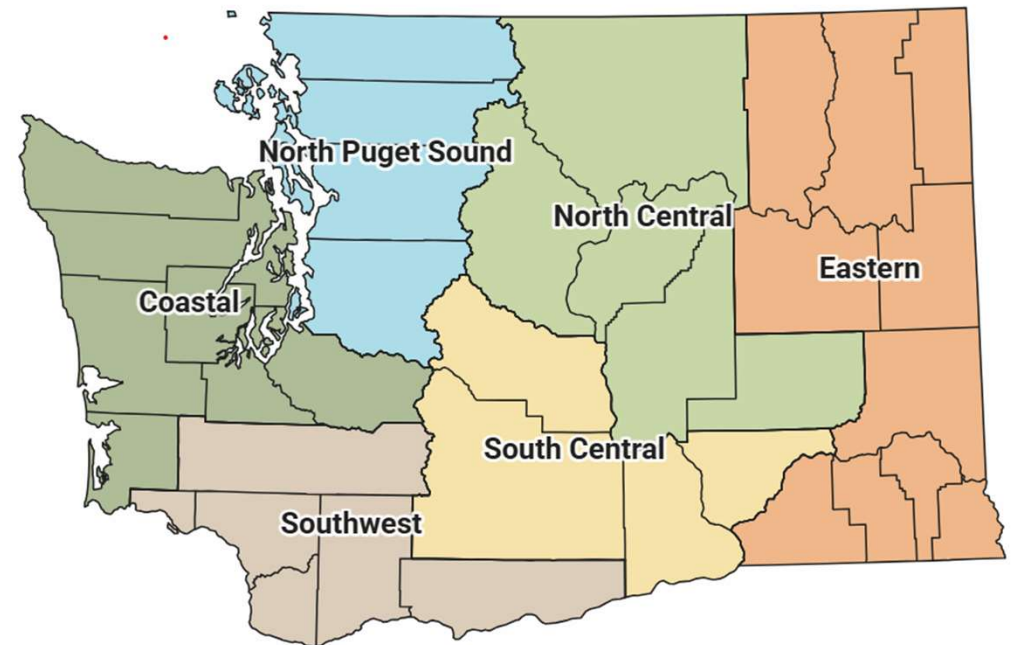
# U.S. vs. OR: Management Parties

- Parties include OR, WA, ID, Treaty tribes
  - Nez Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs, Yakama, (Shoshone-Bannock)
  - WDFW co-manages fisheries and catch limits (e.g., ESA) for non-treaty fisheries with ODFW
  - WDFW represents WA recreational, commercial, and non-treaty tribal interests (Colville and Wanapum)
- Committees
  - Policy Committee - Policy decision body
  - Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) - Forecast, in-season run size updates, run reconstruction, gear mortality rates, ESA accounting
  - Production Advisory Committee (PAC) – hatchery production



# Washington Fisheries Outside *U.S. vs. OR*

- Most tributary fisheries are managed by regions
- Hanford Reach: Region 3
- Upper Columbia River: Region 2
- Colville-WDFW Harvest Agreement
- FMEPs for harvest rates and ESA Impacts
- Snake River: Region 1





# **Fishery considerations, development, and management**

# Abundance

## Pre-season

*U.S. vs. OR* TAC generates a pre-season forecast typically in late February

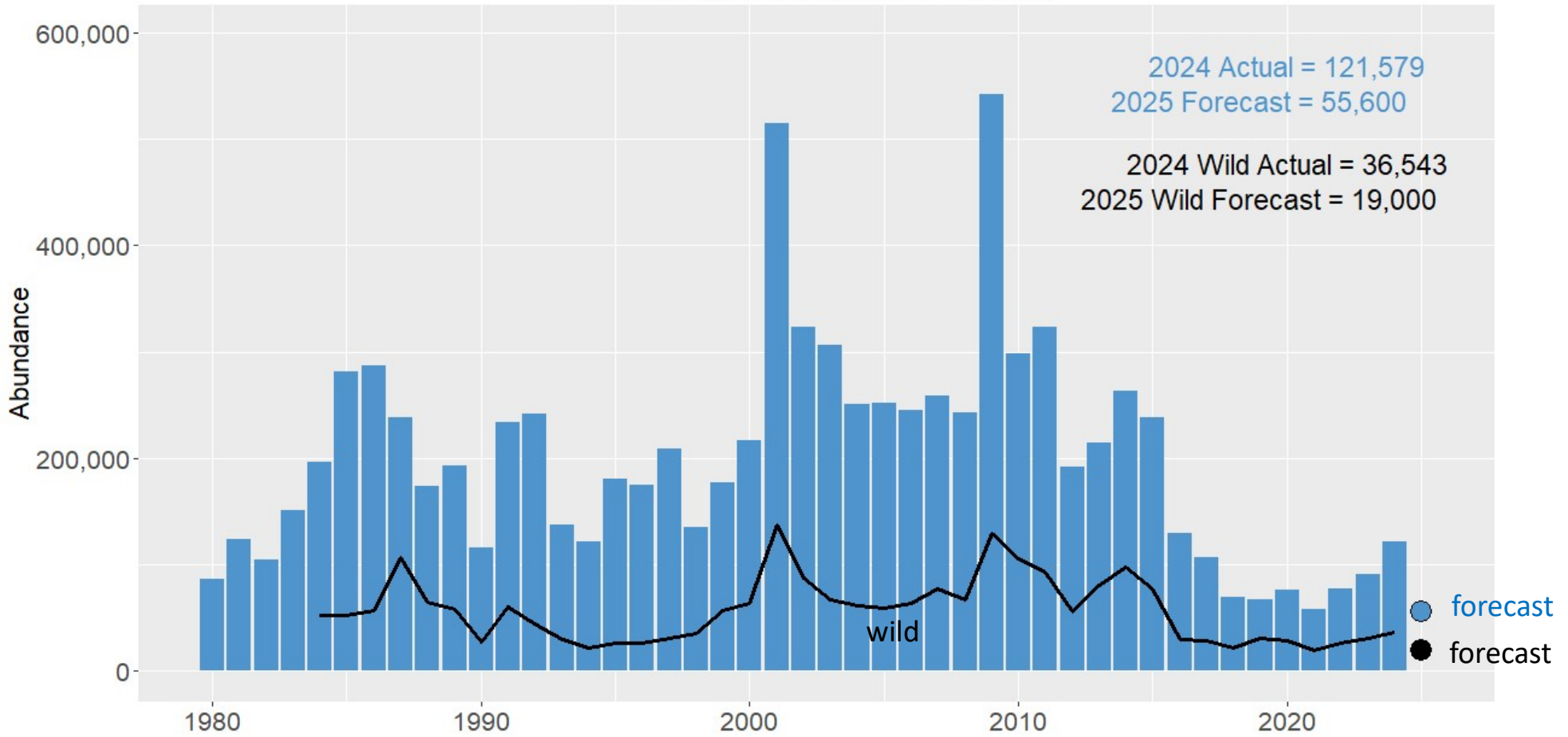
## In-season

Measured at Bonneville Dam using the Adult Fish Facility to provide splits for clipped, unclipped, A-index and B-index components

- Monitors passage from July through October
- Provides an updated abundance estimate used for in-season management purposes

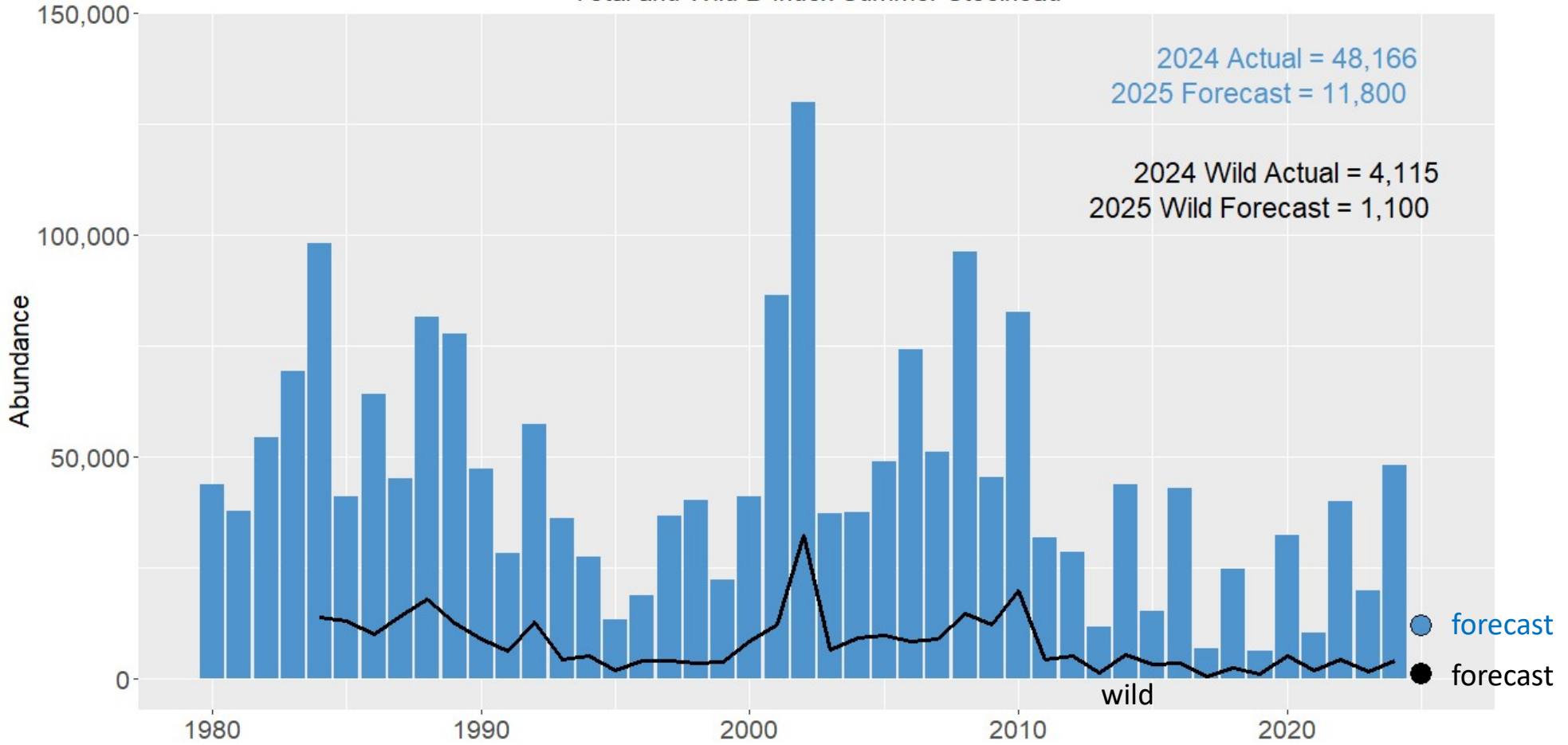


Total and Wild A-Index Summer Steelhead



2025 in-season estimate: 130,600 A-index (combined)

Total and Wild B-Index Summer Steelhead



2025 in-season estimate: 20,100 B-index (combined)

# Fishery Constraints

- Important, coverage for steelhead across the year, for multi-species/stocks fisheries
  - 2% HR on steelhead during winter/spring, and summer seasons
  - 2% non-treaty HR each on wild A and B, excludes Snake Basin (August 1- December 31)

Fishery	Target Species/Stock	Constraining Species/Stock	Rationale
Spring Season	Spring Chinook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upriver Spring Chinook</li> <li>• Sockeye salmon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESA impacts, Catch balance</li> <li>• ESA impacts</li> </ul>
Summer Season	Chinook, Sockeye salmon, and Steelhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A-index Steelhead</li> <li>• SR Sockeye</li> <li>• Summer Chinook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESA impacts</li> <li>• ESA impacts</li> <li>• Escapement goals, allocation</li> </ul>
Fall Season	Chinook, Coho salmon, and steelhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A and B-index steelhead</li> <li>• Tule Chinook</li> <li>• Snake River wild</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESA impacts</li> <li>• In-river/ocean allocation, ESA impacts</li> <li>• ESA impacts</li> </ul>



# Commission guidance for Steelhead



- WA – coldwater refugia paper
- OR – coldwater sanctuaries (e.g., Deschutes mouth)



# North of Falcon/PFMC

- Multi State, Tribal and Federal process
  - Look at summer and fall Chinook, sockeye, coho, and steelhead abundances for the Columbia Basin
  - Abundances of each stock drive fishery design for the entire basin
  - Separate allowable harvest rates per stock
  - Weakest stocks drive fishery design
- Generate recreational rules and set commercial expectations
  - Includes multiple public meetings to inform anglers about upcoming fishery expectations and seasons





# 2025 Example

# Forecasts & Proposed Seasons

## Summer Steelhead:

- 2017, 2019-2024 fishery limitations were based on low A-index and B-index forecasts, including the wild B-index component. Fisheries were structured with block closure to be protective of fish as they progressed upstream.
  - Run size will be updated in-season; A-index is updated weekly starting in late August and B-index is updated weekly starting mid September.
- Continued low A-index and B-index forecasts relative to pre-2017 returns of runs larger than 200,000 fish.
  - 2025 forecast is 59% of recent 5-year average return as compared to 29% of the 20-year average return.
  - There continues to be additional forecast uncertainty with regards to one-aged ocean returning fish as opposed to two-aged ocean returning fish. A-index run is primarily comprised of these one-aged ocean fish. Run size will be updated inseason (mid-August for A-index and mid-September for B-index).

# Forecasts & Proposed Seasons

## Proposed Season Structure for 2025:

- Rolling block closures (e.g., 2017, 2019-2024) from mouth of the Columbia beginning in August continuing upstream. Consideration for the mainstem to remain closed for the most to the run (~July-March in some areas). Night closure.
- Tributary mouths will be closed similarly to the mainstem rolling block closure early summer to fishing for steelhead (no catch and release). Night closure.
- Expect open fishing but possibly abbreviated seasons on the Snake River and tributaries.
- Do not expect to fish the upper Columbia River and tributaries above Priest Rapids Dam.
- Abbreviated hatchery harvest limits in areas that are open (e.g., 1 fish). If actual return is lower than anticipated there may be only catch and release opportunity offered.

**Columbia River mainstem and tributary summer steelhead regulation summary for 2025-26 fisheries (PRELIMINARY).**

Water Body	June 16-June 30	July	August	September	October	November	December	Jan-March	Comments
<b>Columbia River mainstem</b>									
Below I-5 Bridge	Daily limit 1	Daily limit 1	Closed to retention			Permanent Regs for winter steelhead (Daily limit 2)			Some periods of salmon/steelhead angling closures when salmon retention is closed.
I5-Bridge to Bonneville Dam		Daily limit 1	Closed to retention						
Bonneville Dam to The Dalles Dam		Daily limit 1	Closed to retention						
The Dalles Dam to John Day Dam		Daily limit 1		Closed to retention				TBD in-season	
John Day Dam to McNary Dam		Daily limit 1		Closed to retention				TBD in-season	
McNary Dam to Hwy 395 bridge in Pasco		Daily limit 1		Closed to retention				TBD in-season	
Hwy 395 bridge in Pasco to Priest Rapids Dam	Permanent Regs (Closed to angling for steelhead)				Daily limit 1. Ringold Springs Hatchery only (ADRV).				Dependent upon actual UCR and RSH returns. Fishery through 3/31 (Bank 4/1-15). Permanent night closure.
<b>Columbia River tributaries</b>									
Wind/White Salmon (WA) tributary lower reaches	Perm. Regs (Daily limit 2)	Closed to angling for steelhead				Perm. Regs (Daily limit: 3 Wind R; 2 White Salmon R)		Perm. Regs	Lower reaches restricted. Closure improved enforceability.
Drano Lake (WA)						Daily limit 1			Closure improved enforceability.
Klickitat (WA) tributary lower reaches						Perm. Regs (Daily limit 3)			Closure improved enforceability.
Deschutes River (OR) mouth	Daily limit 1	Thermal Angling Sanctuary Regs closed to angling (7/15-9/15)			Perm. Regs (defaults to adjacent mainstem Col R.)			Combination of old perm. regulations (Herman/Eagle Cr. Closures, new permanent regulations, TAS), and intended MS regs by pool which affect these tribs. <b>Note:</b> <u>Herman Cr. Youth and Disabled Angler Angling Area</u> not included; see permanent regulations for this area.	
Eagle Cr. (OR) mouth	Perm. Regs (defaults to adjacent mainstem Col R.)								
Herman Cr. (OR) Lagoon									
<b>Snake River</b>									
Mouth upstream to Couse Creek boat ramp	Perm. Regs (Closed to steelhead retention)			TBD e-rule published by Sept 1					Managed By E-reg. Proposed limits may change to be concurrent with Idaho.
Couse Creek boat ramp upstream to WA/OR/ID stateline	Perm. Regs (Closed to steelhead retention)			TBD e-rule published by Sept 1					Limits may change to be concurrent with Idaho.

# What actually returned in 2025

- TAC provided weekly updates for A-index (starting late July) and B-index (starting mid-September).
  - Final in-season estimates: 130,600 A-index (235% of forecast) and 20,100 B-index (170% of forecast).
- Mainstem fisheries (including below Bonneville) and Drano Lake fished as planned, except did open to 1 fish daily limit during August. Focused harvest on A index avoided B index.
- Snake River and Upper Columbia had the advantage of knowing returns before adjusting rules
- What mechanism or group is used to adjust in-season?



RL1



## Slide 18

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**RL1**

Flagging this as we did open up the mainstem and Drano for August this year....but often it is too late to open. The numbers of A's were quite high in late July and provide an obvious sign we had surplus fish to harvest.

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# Real-time Management - Columbia River Compact and Emergency Rules



## Columbia River Compact

- One Rep. each for WA and OR – covering fisheries on the mainstem Columbia from Bouy 10 to McNary Dam
  - Fishery decision-making authority
  - Establishes non-NOF seasons and all commercial fisheries (spring chinook sturgeon, smelt)
  - Includes tribal commercial fisheries for regulations pertaining to non-treaty fish buyers (authorizing commercial purchase)
  - Provides in-season management actions to modify fisheries, including NOF seasons

## Emergency Rules

- Regions cover adjusting fishing rules in-season for tributaries to the Columbia, including the Snake
- Oregon and Idaho have their own processes for tributaries in their States
  - States coordinate on tributaries that cross or share State lines.

