

## Oregon anglers Scrooged by Fish and Wildlife Commission

Posted by [bmonroe](#) December 14, 2008 11:24AM

In a season (and historical year) when most businesses are fervently thanking customers for their purchases and support, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission had a special message Friday for its sport angling license and tag holders:

Go fish.

And it wasn't meant in the nice, encouraging kind of way.

Far from settling years of bitter acrimony between sport and commercial fishers on the Columbia River through a process commissioners themselves designed, four of the seven-member panel instead threw gasoline at the flames. Commissioners Jon Englund, Bobby Levy, Carter Kerns and Zane Smith carried the seven-member body over the edge.

They spurned a compromise solution to salmon allocation forged by three of their own members (Englund, Dan Edge and Skip Klarquist -- Edge and Klarquist objected, but couldn't stem the tide; chair Marla Rae found herself in the middle, but didn't put up much of a defense) and three others from the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission.

This fall, hoping to avert crisis-management decisions that fuel the acrimony, select commissioners from each state, with the help of representatives of user groups, participated in a protracted and careful process to reach a bi-state agreement.

But Oregon's gang of four reneged, instead demanding an allocation split that would likely take time on the water away from a beleaguered sport fishing industry.

More of the spring chinook run would be allocated to commercial nets under the Oregon commission's proposal to turn back the clock to sub-status quo.

They basically dared the Oregon Legislature to do something about it.

They basically taunted Oregon anglers, whom they've already asked to support a hefty 20 percent license fee increase.

They basically turned their collective backs (four of them did anyway) on warnings that reduced sportfishing could put hundreds and possibly thousands out of work by the end of winter.

They basically told Washington to put the Space Needle where the sun doesn't shine.

On Saturday, an appalled, shocked (and more than a bit insulted) Washington commission took the high road, delaying a decision until its January meeting. That gives stunned biologists in both states time to collect themselves and see whether any compromise can still be struck from all this mess.

It also gives Oregonians a chance to vent to their governor, their legislature, their (maybe formerly "their") Fish and Wildlife Commission and, as always, to themselves.

There will be more on this through the coming week and, almost certainly, in my Sunday column on the sports pages.

...And to think I used to love Christmas.

Categories: [Breaking News](#)

## Comments

### **GRB4fish says...**

Great column Bill,

The ODFW Commission has been saying they wanted to get away from this ugly allocation battle and find a more civil way.

By Jon Englund and Carter Kerns going sideways and ignoring the work and recommendations of ODFW staff and other commissioners from both sides of the river, they have brought the battle right back on to themselves.

I am very thankful that the WDFW Commission stopped the process and is allowing the ODFW Commission to re-think this terrible move.

Amazing that Englund, who sat on the Working Group, didn't get his way in that process, then worked this deal to steal the ball for his team.

When you are the guy (Englund) who sells Gillnets to the Gillnetters, he only did what you would expect him to do.

This system is broken and needs to change.

Posted on 12/14/08 at 2:51PM

### **jwb1957 says...**

Its obvious that Englund and his commie fisherman cohorts aren't interested in compromise. They want it all- Just like their Alaska Halibut comrades.

Posted on 12/14/08 at 4:57PM

### **positivewins says...**

It's time to send ODFW a message. Due to the money wasted pursuing "Snowball the Deer" and this allocation decision, I am not going to renew my fishing license in 2009. This will be the first time in decades I haven't had one, but I feel this Agency has forgotten its purpose and needs to be sent a message. I'd urge anyone who can to do likewise.

Posted on 12/15/08 at 6:34AM

### **bofus says...**

"They want it all.."

It's amazing a sport fisherman could say such a thing with a straight face. Hypocritical to the "nth" degree.

Posted on 12/15/08 at 1:40PM

### **hilaryclinto says...**

When most fishers were not here or still poopin' yellow, the Astoria fishers went to Salem to burn the capital if Bonneville Dam was built without fish ladders, as was planned. It is only for their militancy that there is the last fish to argue over.

When the Legislature folded the Fish Commission into the Game Commission, to become the ODFW, there was the fear that food fisheries were going to get short shrift. No, no. This is just a move to not have doubled up efforts for the same goal, was the answer.

BS.....Sports fishing on the Columbia river was going out on a gillnetter boat with a guide and a big bamboo rod, a star drag reel, pulling a Lucky Louie plus in pink pearl with a red gill slash. That it has become the gps, radar, depth finder, fish finder, dependable power deal for anyone with \$50 grand and free time is a new deal, and so are the two and one half million more people.

If you carefully look over the legislation that drives Columbia River fisheries, all this dam electricity and salmon is about hatcheries to supply a commercial fishery. Lose that fishery by administrative edict, and there is a Todd True or some other Earth Justice lawyer out there to shut those hatcheries down. At that point, ESA rulings will preclude any fishing. It is about time for the sports fishers to realize that they ride the coat tails of the gillnetters, and should be damned glad they are there to fish for the market, and to keep fish in the river. If you think their intention is to catch the last fish, I pity your ignorance. That is what sport fishing is about. That is who you find snagging salmon on the spawning beds.

I watched several years ago, the charter fleet at Depoe Bay keeping short chinooks that trollers "shake", to limit out their boats and not put silvers on the fish tags or for the fish checkers to check. It extended their season. And they got one more year of fishing, and then the chinook were gone. Too few fish to allow for a season. The charters got what they deserved on that deal. They were in it to catch the last fish. They might have.

Posted on 12/15/08 at 10:55PM

### **someforall says...**

I was involved as a commercial rep in all three of the "visioning" processes that were started over a year ago, including the first two which were scuttled by some members of the sport fishing community who weren't getting their way in eliminating a commercial harvest of spring Chinook. The outcome of this last effort could have been predicted without holding any meetings just by looking at the six reps sent by the two commissions. The three from Washington are the most vocal pro-sport/anti-commercial on that commission.

No one seems to want to mention that the staff proposal at the last of those meetings was actually for a 60/40 baseline split, but the commissioners dropped it in their closed-door conference to 65/35, and some wanted 70/30. No one seems to want to mention that the sport testimony provided no science to warrant the decision, simply anecdotes about lost jobs but no promises that any of those jobs would be restored by more spring Chinook fishing time. No one seems to want to mention that the sport share has been climbing over the last 7 years and even if the whole non-Indian impact went to them, in many years they still might not have their vision of a 6-8 week sport fishery in March and April. No one seems to want to mention that it was the sport fishery that went over the ESA impacts last year, not the commercial fishery.

The whole Safe for Salmon proposal to put the commercial fishery in the Select Areas so the sport fishery can have the mainstem harvest is a pie-in-the-sky pipe dream of pro-sport lobbyists like Jim Martin, who use their credentials to push a pro-sport agenda that they know will push the commercial fleet out of business. They could at least have the courage to admit it, instead of pretending it's some kind of win-win. Respectable writers like Bill Monroe, who usually offer enjoyable and informative hunting, fishing and wildlife stories, should take off their blinders and see the scam for what it is.

The wildlife commissions of both states are tasked with managing the resources under their care by statute guidelines, not making social decisions that benefit one user group at the elimination of another. That's at the heart of what Oregon did and what Washington hasn't the sense to realize. I would challenge anyone who heard the testimony last Friday to point out any solid, science based comment offered by the sport industry members in attendance that would support a decision to transfer the lion's share of the spring Chinook harvest away from the commercial industry and the public they fish for, and instead give it to the sport fishing community. It time for this fighting to end and for both groups to work together and promote processes that create more fish so that everyone benefits, but some elements of the sport fishing community are clearly opposed to something as progressive as that, and prefer to agitate and offer half-truths that maintain the destructive dialogue and constant bickering and conflict that distract from the needs of the resource. Commercial fishermen are not opposed to sport fishing - in fact many have been avid hunters and sport fishers all their lives. We can also accept the fact that some people just don't like commercial fishing, especially with nets. But don't pretend that there is any science that warrants the elimination of commercial salmon fisheries, even on the Columbia. I've listened to hours of testimony and discussion on the subject and nothing substantive has yet been offered by the sport fishing leaders who oppose commercial fishing.

Posted on 12/16/08 at 8:34AM

#### **5Salt says...**

Fact: Sport Angling Generates \$3billion in revenue for the Northwest Economy....yes Billion.

Commercial fishing generates \$300million for the same economy.

Allocate the fish on what is best for the economy and commercial interests end up with about 10% of the columbia river spring salmon. It was only a matter of time before the buggy-whip providers faded away and the same will happend for Gillnetters on the CR.

If I was Gillnetter I would looking hard for a new profession so I would not have to endure the hardship surely headed for this last hold out days gone by.

Posted on 12/16/08 at 11:18PM

#### **sheidloff says...**

1st let me give my credentials, one of my Grandfathers owned a major lumbermill in washington from the late 50's to the early 70's, and the other was deeply involved with the commercial gillnet fleet on the Columbia river (as were his father, and grandfather), plus my family on both sides has been in farming since the late 1800's and continue to do so today.

I'm sure that none of them anticipated the issues that now face us. The gillnet fleet likes to point their fingers and say that the sportsfisherman want to eliminate all commercial fishing on the river, this is just one of many false statements that they like to throw out. The reality is that the true sportsman is not against commercial harvest on the columbia, but they are against a non-selective gillnet harvest, and want to remove gillnets from

the river. The problem is that many dacades ago the gillnetter's (not the commercial industry) pushed thru legislation that make gillnetting the only form of commercial harvest allowed on the columbia river, and now with the push by multiple groups (not just sports fishermen) to remove them from the river they are afraid that they may not be able to change the legislation they created. Which would then mean that they would lose approximately 3% of their documented income.

The reason I said documented income is because no one (but the gillnetters) is sure how much illegal overharvest there is that is never documented at the processors, have you ever seen a roadside stand selling salmon? There's the possibility that it came from overharvest by the gillnet fleet.

It has been mentioned above that one solution that the gillnetters are against is moving the fleet to select areas like youngs bay, they say that this won't work because there is not enough room for all of us (another out right lie). Oregon allows 200 gillnet licenses, of those 200 there are normally only about half that are actively fished in any year, and of those that are actively fished less than half of those are used in any one season that the Department sets for them. 50 netters spread thru the select area's should not be the problem that they want us to believe it is. The main reason they don't want to be restricted to the select areas is greed. For a number of years now the DFW has been reducing the number of hatchery fish released into the tributaries of the columbia, and instead releasing them into the select areas that are almost exclusively used by the gillnetters when the columbia is closed to them. This allows them to in reality harvest the lions share of the salmon produce in Washington & Oregon.

We need to go to a more selective commercial harvest method. Legistation needs to be changed for this to happen. If we don't, then commercial harvest needs to be moved to the select area's.

I'll go ahead and stop for now (we'll talk about drop out's, and other kool stuff in my next installment), and wait for the inevitable rebuttals.

Posted on 12/17/08 at 8:41AM

### **Alwayzfishin says...**

Again it's not about the commercial fishing, it's about the method. It's about utilizing a resource to it's full financial potential without the damages caused my bycatch.

Anyone that doesn't really understand the damage that gillnets cause to the enviroment need to Google the term "ghost nets". Pictures are worth a thousand words.

I find the following quote from above very short sighted.

"That is what sport fishing is about. That is who you find snagging salmon on the spawning beds."

If you are so interested in having ESA fish arrive on the spawning beds to begin with you would be onboard with the "Safe for salmon plan" or even better yet finding greener methods for harvest.

It is sad that your desperation shines through in these desperate below the belt attacks. A poacher is a poacher. Poachers come in all shapes, sizes and colors. There are poachers that operate within the commercial ranks and poachers that hide as sportfishers. Call them what they are and leave that discussion for a later time.

Posted on 12/17/08 at 9:44AM

**cutplug says...**

I am very disappointed to see the decisions that are being made concerning the harvest of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River. The use of gill nets shows just how greedy and uncaring we really are when it comes to salmon. Gill nets kill thousands of non-target species and incidentally kill thousands of salmon and steelhead that get caught in the net, manage to escape, and ultimately die from wounds before successfully spawning. As a sportsman you expect me to fish with one hook and release all wild fish while someone else fishes with a net and kills everything? Ridiculous. The days of using gill nets are over, we no longer have the luxury of millions of fish that we once had and gill nets need to go away forever.

Posted on 12/17/08 at 11:27AM

**fishbreath says...**

40 years ago my father, an attorney, represented gillnetter interests in Washington. Around the kitchen table discussion of the competition over scarce fish resources was a common topic.-40 YEARS AGO!....and counting it would seem... So it goes. The likes of Hillary Clinto, Bofus, and Someforall seem to think their best shot is to mischaracterise the opposition and only accept science that is convenient for them to believe in. If these folks are so upset about their livelihood being robbed from them we need to remind them that so far, nobody is suggesting that they be forbidden from fishing for a living, only that non selective methods be ceased. Although I have lived around water, boats, and fishing all my life I and most people didn't choose to support myself and my family in an industry that from what I have witnessed, has been embroiled in uncertainty and controversy for nigh on 40 years. The public will get its fish without you. Your undoing has begun . You only brought this upon yourselves.

Posted on 12/17/08 at 2:04PM

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Posted on 12/17/08 at 2:04PM

**sstewart1954 says...**

Once again the whining, cry babies got their ass handed to them by the better prepared gill netters...tsk tsk!  
When will you guys learn?  
You put your faith and money in some eastern group like CCA and what did you get for it? Some really nice

banquets at least huh?

I have no love for gill nets but why do you sports fishers think you are entitled to the lion's share? Oh and please do give me the excuse that you are trying to save wild fish because most of you could not care less about wild fish.

Posted on 12/17/08 at 3:38PM

**zarn says...**

Gillnetters catch all you want.... even extend commerical and sport fishing season.

Only one catch... get rid of the gear kills almost everything else in its deployment area and fish with hook and line. Pretty simple solution to the whole mess.

Why are "special interest" types allowed sit or advise this commission and have ANY input/influence? Clearly they are only "experts" in filling their own coffers at the expense of others. Nothing new in the good ole boy network that seems to pervade the Northwest.

BTW... I have a Senate seat I would like to sell ya.

Z1

Posted on 12/23/08 at 9:04PM

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