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## Salmon proposals to restrict Columbia gillnetting

Other anglers still would be allowed on main river

*Statesman Journal*

The brouhaha over Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon has been joined in the Oregon Legislature.

More than 200 people — almost everyone in the lobby overflow area watching on TV monitors sporting orange CCA (Coastal Conservation Association) ballcaps — turned out for an informational session to hear about a half-dozen bills dealing with commercial gillnetting in front of the members of the House Committee on Sustainability and Economic Development.

The two bills that have the broadest support among angling, sportfishing and conservation groups would move commercial gillnetters off the main river and into lower-river Select Area Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) juvenile salmon release sites in sloughs and side channels.

Here is an overview of what's in the pipeline, beginning with the two that have the broadest support the sports side:

House Bill 2734 and companion Senate Bill 554: The so-called "SAFE for Salmon" legislation is the brainchild of Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association and several conservation biologists. It would require that all non-Native American gillnetting move into SAFE areas.

Companion bills HB 2579 and Senate Bill 527: These are the CCA's babies. Both would require only fixed fishing gear (basically traps) or small-mesh nets known as seines for taking commercial salmon.

The most obvious trap sites would be fish ladders, and because of the volume and flows on the Columbia, seining operations would of necessity move commercial netting into SAFE areas.

Both sets of bills are touted as lessening — some at the hearing said eliminating — the incidental take of federally protected non-hatchery wild salmon by commercial netters.

It's the allowed incidental deaths of listed salmon that caps the sport and commercial catches, proponents of the bills argued at the hearing.

So cutting the losses by the more lethal gillnetting would mean more fish for both sport and commercial anglers.

Gillnetters representatives at the hearing were vehemently opposed to moving off-river, saying that there isn't room in the SAFE areas for the fleet. And, they argued, with the reduced quality of the SAFE-area salmon, they couldn't make enough to make it a viable fishery.

Two other bills go farther.

HB 2781 and SB524: Would prohibit any non-Native American commercial nets in the Columbia for taking salmon, steelhead or sturgeon.

And there's a wild card in the deck that didn't come up during the hearing. HB 3323 would change turn the tables not just on the Columbia, but statewide. It would make guides and charters operators

commercial anglers.

So that anyone who takes paying customers to fish for salmon, steelhead or sturgeon would need to be a part of what's known as a "limited-entry" fishery.

In other words a 450 cap on the number of resident licenses accompanied by hefty license (\$250) and annual renewal (\$50) fees as well as an "endorsement" fee (\$250) and annual renewal charge of \$125 to fish in each of four regions in the state.

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