



May 24, 2021

Dear Legislators:

Despite our collective efforts this legislative session to advance the bi-state Columbia River salmon fishery reforms, Governor Jay Inslee issued a section veto of the \$2 million budget proviso for a voluntary buyback of non-tribal Columbia River gillnet licenses connected with reforms to transition non-tribal gillnets from the mainstem lower Columbia River. Governor Inslee's veto follows continued efforts by his Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission appointees to undo the Oregon/Washington reform plan and drastically increase non-selective commercial gillnetting in the lower Columbia River in conflict with the conservation needs of wild and ESA-listed Columbia River basin salmon and steelhead populations.

In his veto message to the legislature, the Governor pointed to concerns that the budget proviso language reducing mainstem gillnetting "conflicts with Washington's agreement with the state of Oregon on the management of commercial gillnet fisheries on the Columbia River." However, the budget proviso would have brought the two states into much closer alignment compared to the recent Commission policy decision, which conflicts with the policies of the State of Oregon across every single fishing season. Governor Inslee has taken no position on the Commission's action.

Needless to say, we are very disappointed that after receiving letters from legislators, conservation groups and sportfishing organizations and businesses, the Governor still chose to veto this provision. Despite this, we are still greatly encouraged by the legislature's commitment this session to improve the management and conservation of Columbia River fisheries.

Governor Inslee's veto message also indicates that he supports a voluntary buyback of non-tribal Columbia River gillnet licenses. However, it is unclear if he supports a buyback program that will actually reduce gillnetting, rather than WDFW's proposal to purchase inactive licenses while simultaneously seeking to *increase* gillnetting by active fishers. Fortunately, the legislature soundly rejected this proposal this session.

It is our hope that Governor Inslee, WDFW and the Commission will now recognize that the legislature wants meaningful action that focuses on a buyout of active licenses in support of the restrictions on the use of non-tribal gillnets in the mainstem of the lower Columbia River and the shift to more selective fishing practices.

We will be communicating with you in the weeks and months ahead on how you can engage in support of a non-tribal gillnet license buyback and the Columbia River fishery reforms next session and through the 2022 Supplemental Operating Budget.

Thank you again for all your leadership on this important issue!

Sincerely Yours,

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