

**FINAL 2022 WASHINGTON BUDGET LANGUAGE
APPROVED BY THE HOUSE, SENATE & GOVERNOR**

Voluntary Buyback Program

\$14,400,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the department to reduce the number of nontribal commercial gillnet fishing licenses on the Columbia river through a voluntary buy-back program.

(a) Until November 30, 2022, the department may pay up to \$25,000 each for licenses that have been inactive since 2019 and up to \$120,000 each for licenses that have been active since 2019. After November 30, 2022, the department may pay up to \$20,000 each for licenses that have been inactive since 2019 and up to \$96,000 each for licenses that have been active since 2019. It is the intent of the legislature that this will be the last appropriation made to buy back licenses for the Columbia river gillnet fishery.

(b) For all licenses purchased, the department shall calculate the reduced impacts to wild and endangered stocks based on the most recent five-year average of harvest and reserve those impacts for conservation through increased wild salmonid escapement or mark selective fisheries capable of harvesting surplus hatchery-reared salmon where needed to meet federal genetic protection requirements for wild salmon populations in a manner consistent with state-tribal fishery management agreements.

(c) The department must make recommendations to the legislature for any necessary changes in statute, regulations, or program funding levels to transition lower Columbia river mainstem gillnet fisheries to alternative, selective fishing gears, including pound nets or other gears capable of benefitting wild salmon conservation through mark-selective harvest practices. The recommendation must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2022.