

**Meeting Date:** May 16, 2024

**Agenda Item No.** 5E

**Agenda Item:** Season Modification, Spring Season  
Chinook Salmon Fisheries

**Bureau Chief Approval:** LH

**Prepared by:** John Cassinelli, Anadromous Fish Manager

**Presented by:** Lance Hebdon, Chief of Fisheries

**Background:**

This agenda item concerns the modification of Chinook Salmon fishing seasons targeting adult anadromous Spring Chinook Salmon. Staff will review updated in-season returns over Bonneville Dam and propose changes to season structures. This request is due to the numbers of actual returning adult Chinook Salmon over Bonneville Dam exceeding the preseason forecast.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:**

Idaho Statute 36-104(b)2 gives the Commission the authority to make a rule or proclamation establishing seasons and methods for the taking of fish. Fishing Rules are provided in IDAPA 13.01.11

**Public Involvement Process:**

Public meetings to seek input on 2024 summer Chinook Salmon seasons were held in Riggins, Lewiston, Orofino, Coeur d'Alene, Nampa, Boise and Cascade during February. Fish and Game Regional staffs hosted each of the meetings to provide information on 2024 projected salmon returns and to allow for public comment on potential 2024 seasons. The proposed change in season structure is supported by the season matrix developed with public input.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approve the proposed 2024 fishing season modifications for Spring Chinook Salmon.

**Justification:**

Salmon and steelhead mitigation hatcheries were built to mitigate or compensate for fishing opportunity lost as a result of hydropower development. The proposed season would provide anglers the opportunity to fish for returning adult hatchery Chinook Salmon produced at Idaho mitigation hatcheries.

**Recommended Motion:** I move the Commission approves the proposed modifications to the Clearwater spring Chinook Salmon fishing seasons and limits as proposed in the staff recommendation.

**2024 SPRING CHINOOK SALMON FISHERIES PROPOSAL FOR SEASON SETTING**  
May 16, 2024

**I. SEASONS – CHINOOK SALMON**

**A. Opening Dates**

**1. The following areas open to fishing for Chinook Salmon on April 27, 2024:**

Clearwater River Drainage

- Mainstem Clearwater River - From the Camas Prairie Railroad Bridge at Lewiston upstream to the South Fork Clearwater River (see Special Restrictions for closure areas).
- North Fork Clearwater River - From its mouth upstream to Dworshak Dam (see Special Restrictions for closure areas).
- South Fork Clearwater River - From its mouth upstream to the confluence of American and Red rivers (see Special Restrictions).
- Middle Fork Clearwater River - From the South Fork Clearwater River upstream to the confluence of the Lochsa and Selway rivers.

Salmon River Drainage

- Lower Salmon River- From the Rice Creek Bridge upstream to Shorts Creek (see Special Restrictions regarding fishing from watercraft).
- Little Salmon River- From the mouth upstream to the US Highway 95 Bridge near Smokey Boulder Road (see Special Restrictions regarding fishing from watercraft).

Snake River Drainage

- Snake River- From Dug Bar Boat Ramp to Hells Canyon Dam.

**B. Closing Dates**

Areas will be closed by Closure Order signed by the Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game or August 10, 2024, whichever comes first.

**C. Fishing Days**

Clearwater River Drainage

- Fishing for Chinook Salmon will be open four (4) days per week, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in the ~~mainstem Clearwater~~, North Fork Clearwater, ~~Middle Fork Clearwater, and South Fork Clearwater~~ rivers.
- Fishing for Chinook Salmon will be open seven (7) days per week in the ~~mainstem Clearwater, Middle Fork Clearwater, and South Fork Clearwater~~ rivers effective immediately.

Lower Salmon and Little Salmon rivers

- Fishing for Chinook Salmon will be open four (4) days per week, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Snake River

- Fishing for Chinook Salmon will be open seven (7) days per week.

## D. Fishing Hours

Fishing for Chinook Salmon is lawful only during the hours shown in the table below.

Dates:	Pacific Daylight Time		Mountain Daylight Time	
	Begin	End	Begin	End
April 27 to May 31	5:00 AM	9:00 PM	6:00 AM	10:00 PM
June 1 to August 10	4:30 AM	9:00 PM	5:30 AM	10:00 PM

## II. LIMITS

### A. Daily and Possession Limits

Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, Middle Fork Clearwater River, ~~and South Fork Clearwater River~~

- Daily = Four (4) Chinook Salmon, only one (1) may be an adult
  - Possession = Twelve (12) Chinook Salmon, only three (3) may be adults
- South Fork Clearwater River**
- **Daily = Four (4) Chinook Salmon, only two (2) may be adults**
  - **Possession = Twelve (12) Chinook Salmon, only six (6) may be adults**

Lower Salmon and Little Salmon rivers

- Daily = Four (4) Chinook Salmon, only one (1) may be an adult
- Possession = Twelve (12) Chinook Salmon, only three (3) may be adults

Snake River

- Daily = Four (4) Chinook Salmon, only two (2) may be adults
- Possession = Twelve (12) Chinook Salmon, only six (6) may be adults

### B. Season Limit, Statewide

No person may take more than ten (10) adult Spring or Summer Chinook Salmon statewide during 2024 salmon seasons occurring prior to August 10, 2024.

### C. Definitions pertaining to limits

- Adult Chinook Salmon are defined as any Chinook Salmon greater than or equal to 24 inches in length.
- Jack Chinook Salmon are defined as any Chinook Salmon less than 24 inches in length.

D. Anglers may only harvest adult and jack Chinook Salmon with a clipped adipose fin.

## III. SPECIAL RESTRICTIONS

### A. Clearwater River Basin

#### 1. Mainstem Clearwater River

- Fishing from the shoreline along the perimeter of Dworshak National Fish Hatchery is prohibited.
- In the Big Eddy near Lenore Rest Area at milepost 28 on US Highway 12, fishing from any watercraft is prohibited from a posted boundary at about river mile 27.6 extending upstream to the posted boundary at about river mile 28.0.
- Fishing between posted boundaries 100 yards upstream and downstream from the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Ladder (near Cherrylane Bridge) and extending into the river channel 50 yards is prohibited.

## **2. North Fork Clearwater River**

- The mouth of the North Fork Clearwater River is defined as a straight line between the Clearwater Hatchery outlet culvert on the west side and the posted sign at the tip of land below the Dworshak Hatchery on the east side.
- Fishing from the shoreline or wading along the perimeter of Dworshak National Fish Hatchery is prohibited.
- Fishing from any watercraft or wading is prohibited between the posted sign approximately 150 yards upstream from the mouth of the North Fork Clearwater River to the Ahsahka Highway 7 Bridge.
- When fishing from the Ahsahka Highway 7 Bridge, it is unlawful to take or attempt to take any fish downstream of the railroad bridge. Fishing from the railroad bridge is prohibited.

## **3. South Fork Clearwater River**

- Only single-pointed barbless hooks are allowed while fishing for salmon in the South Fork Clearwater River.

## **B. Lower and Little Salmon rivers**

- Fishing from any watercraft is prohibited within 30 yards of the west shoreline of the Salmon River from the Riggins City Park boat ramp upstream to a posted boundary approximately 50 yards upstream of the mouth of the Little Salmon River. Fishing from any watercraft is also prohibited in the Little Salmon River from the mouth upstream approximately 200 yards to a posted boundary.