

Meeting Date: March 16, 2023

Agenda Item No. 5.A

Agenda Item: Season Setting, Spring Season Chinook
Salmon Fisheries

Bureau Chief Approval: LH

Prepared by: John Cassinelli, Anadromous Fish Manager

Background:

This agenda item concerns the setting of Chinook Salmon fishing seasons targeting adult anadromous Chinook Salmon in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, and South Fork Clearwater River. Fisheries staff will brief the Commission on the pre-season forecasts for Snake River spring and summer Chinook salmon returns for 2023 and propose salmon seasons based on the pre-season forecast and public input. For all proposed fishing areas, sufficient numbers of hatchery salmon are forecasted to return in 2023 to provide sport fisheries that target the non-tribal harvestable share after brood stock targets are considered.

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 2023 Chinook Salmon seasons were held in Riggins, Lewiston, Orofino, Coeur d'Alene, and Cascade during February. Fish and Game Regional staffs hosted each of the meetings to provide information on 2023 projected salmon returns and to allow for public comment on potential 2023 seasons.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed 2023 fishing seasons for Chinook Salmon in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, and South Fork Clearwater River.

Justification:

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