



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

July 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: Season Modification, Chinook Salmon Fisheries (**Action**)

Presented by: John Cassinelli

Position/Title: Anadromous Fisheries Program Manager

Agenda Item No.: 5. L.
Supervisor Approval: LH

Background:

This agenda item concerns the modification of two Chinook Salmon seasons. 1) summer Chinook Salmon fishing season targeting adult anadromous Chinook Salmon in the South Fork Salmon River, and 2) fall Chinook Salmon fishing seasons targeting adult anadromous Chinook Salmon in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, Middle Fork Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, and South Fork Clearwater River.

Fisheries staff will brief the Commission on updated return estimates for South Fork Salmon River Summer Chinook and the pre-season forecasts for Snake River fall Chinook Salmon returns for 2026 and propose modified daily bag and possession limits.

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 2026 spring/summer Chinook Salmon seasons were held in Riggins, Lewiston, Orofino, Coeur d'Alene, Moscow, Cascade, and Nampa during February. Fish and Game Regional staff hosted each of the meetings to provide information on 2026 projected salmon returns and to allow for public comment on potential 2026 seasons.

Fall Chinook season structure is set through the Department's three year fishery season and rules cycle. The setting of those seasons and rules (currently adopted through 2027) includes a public scoping process. The modifications proposed for the 2026 season are to stay within compliance of Endangered Species Act (ESA) permit conditions related to harvest and catch and release encounters of wild adult Fall Chinook Salmon. The 2019 Fisheries Monitoring and Evaluation Plan also went through a public scoping process during final submission and prior to the issuance of the ESA permit covering Fall Chinook Salmon Fisheries.

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



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modifications would provide anglers the opportunity to fish for returning adult Chinook Salmon produced at Snake River basin mitigation hatcheries without jeopardizing the natural-origin population.

Staff Recommendation:

The Department recommends the Commission approve the proposed 2026 bag and possession limit modifications for summer Chinook Salmon Fisheries in the South Fork Salmon River and for fall Chinook Salmon fisheries in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, Middle Fork Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, and South Fork Clearwater River.

Suggested Motion:

I move the Commission adopt the summer and fall Chinook Salmon bag and possession limit modifications as recommended by the Department.