

**Meeting Date:** November 15, 2022

**Agenda Item No. 13**

**Agenda Item:** Concerns Regarding Catch & Release  
Angling Mortality in Idaho

**Bureau Chief Approval:** LH

**Prepared by:** Joe Kozfkay, State Resident Fisheries Manager

**Background:**

This agenda item is a non-action item providing background on catch-and-release fisheries and the science that informs Department recommendations to adopt or not adopt restrictive regulations. Idaho fish populations are affected primarily by two sources of mortality: natural and fishing related. Historically, the major source of fishing-related mortality was the result of direct harvest, that is most anglers chose to harvest most caught fish of legal size. This tendency and inadequate regulation in certain waters led to the over-harvest and depletion of some fish populations. As a result, fishing regulations gradually became more restrictive during the 1970s-80s. Amongst the most restrictive of these regulations was elimination of harvest, while anglers were often still allowed to “fish-for-fun”. Later coined “catch-and-release”, this regulation strategy became very popular, especially on blue-ribbon trout waters throughout the United States. While often popular among avid anglers, catch-and-release fishing regulations in some instances have been controversial. As a result, catch-and-release regulations have generated a large body of associated research to help inform conflict management amongst stakeholder groups. Initial controversies focused on gear- or harvest-restricted areas, barbed versus barbless hooks, and use of bait. While these topics remain relevant, anglers have become more concerned with air exposure after capture (i.e., time out of water) and catch-and-release fishing during periods of elevated water temperatures (i.e., “hoot owl” regulations) or other purportedly stressful periods. Department staff have been conducting research studies to better inform our fisheries management decisions regarding catch-and-release, air exposure, and “hoot owl” closures. This presentation will summarize the results of those studies and present our current understanding of these topics and on-going Department efforts to improve understanding of these fishing-related sources of mortality.

**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:**

There was no specific public involvement process for this agenda item; however, the public often requests fishing seasons and limits changes to the Commission and staff. The Commission and the Department receive input throughout the year via social media, email, phone calls, public meetings and hearings, as well as other events. The most recent (2022-2024) seasons and limits proclamation was adopted during November of 2021 and the next will be before the commission during November 2024.

**Staff Recommendation:**

None. This agenda item is for Commission informational only.

**Justification:**

Information will aid Commissioners as they respond to requests, recommendations, or other input from the public.