

Meeting Date: 16 November, 2021

Agenda Item No. 5b

Agenda Item: Modification of Spring 2022 Steelhead Seasons

Bureau Chief Approval: LH

Prepared by: Chris Sullivan, Anadromous Fisheries Coordinator

Background:

This agenda item concerns modifications to fisheries targeting hatchery-origin Steelhead on the Salmon, Clearwater, and Snake rivers.

The steelhead forecast for the 2021-22 run year was projected to be one of the lowest returns in the last 2 decades. Counts of steelhead at Lower Granite Dam are lower than the 10-year average and are tracking below the forecast. The steelhead daily bag limit was reduced to one (1) fish statewide for the fall 2021 seasons. At the time of preparation of this Gold Sheet, staff were reviewing daily fish passage and harvest information and considering necessary modifications to the spring 2022 season. Potential options to manage the low returns include reduced bag limits and/or implementing length limits to conserve broodstock needed for Hatchery programs.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Idaho Statute 36-104(b)2 gives the Commission the authority to set fishing seasons. Rules governing fish are provided in IDAPA 13.01.11

Public Involvement Process:

Public input has been received as part of the three-year season setting process that established the 2019-2021 and 2022-2024 steelhead seasons and rules.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff will present recommended modifications to the spring 2022 Steelhead seasons for the Salmon, Clearwater, and Snake rivers at the November 16 Commission meeting.

Justification:

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 harvest steelhead returning to the hatcheries.