

Meeting Date: 20 September, 2019

Agenda Item No. 1(A)

Agenda Item: Season Setting — Clearwater River
Steelhead Fishery

Bureau Chief Approval: ES

Prepared by: Lance Hebdon, Anadromous Fish Manager

Background:

This agenda item concerns fisheries targeting hatchery-origin Steelhead on the Clearwater River and its tributaries and a short section of the Snake River near Lewiston Idaho.

The number of hatchery steelhead returning to the Clearwater River are not projected to meet brood stock requirements. Therefore, no steelhead are available for harvest without significant negative implications to future hatchery steelhead production in the Clearwater River basin hatcheries, jeopardizing future steelhead fisheries in the Clearwater basin. The low returns will necessitate the implementation of further fishery restrictions in the Clearwater River and a short reach of the Snake River near Lewiston. At the time of this Gold Sheet preparation, staff was monitoring escapement and developing modifications to the existing steelhead seasons and limits for discussion and action at the September 20 Commission meeting.

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 steelhead seasons and rules.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed adjustments to the 2019 Steelhead seasons for Clearwater and Snake rivers.

Justification:

Steelhead mitigation hatcheries were built to compensate for fishing opportunity lost as a result of hydropower development. A primary responsibility of fishery management is to ensure that enough brood stock are collected to propagate the next generation of hatchery fish, providing fishery opportunity in perpetuity. Fish numbers in excess of the brood stock are available for harvest. The run of hatchery steelhead returning to the Clearwater River is not large enough to provide harvest.