

Attachment B. Summary of Public Scoping for 2019–2021 Fishing Rules

January – March, 2018

From January through March, 2018, Regional Fisheries staff and the Fisheries Bureau began seeking input on fishing rules from internal staff and the public for inclusion in the 2019–2021 fishing rules proclamation. Outreach efforts specific to fishing rule development included:

- Press release February 2, 2018 (includes meeting schedule, web comment form)
- 18 open houses and community meetings (included all regions)
- Randomized mail survey for scoping Priest Lake input (Fall 2017)
- Regional presentations to sporting groups and at local sportsman’s expos.
- Facebook posts announcing opportunities for input
- Facebook Events - all open house events on each Regional Facebook calendar
- IDFG online public comment form
- IDFG internal staff meetings in each region

A total of 59 comments were submitted through our Department website using the online comment form. Additionally, fisheries field staff collected comments from regional open houses, sportsman meetings and email.

Regional staff also made considerable additional effort specifically to collect public input on management direction for Stanley Lake (Salmon Region) and Priest Lake (Panhandle Region). These included forming local advisory committees, regular public meetings with local stakeholders, and randomized mail surveys to scope management options (Priest Lake, fall 2018). Neither of these efforts resulted in proposed season or bag limit changes at this time.

Regional Input Highlights

Panhandle Region

Upper Priest Lake and tributaries: Changing the Lake Trout harvest limits and bait restrictions was well-supported in our scoping meetings with little opposition. Because of adequate scoping of the proposals, we proposed to move forward with changing the Lake Trout harvest limits, removing bait restrictions and removing the requirement of using barbless hooks.

Clearwater Region

Clearwater Smallmouth Bass: During public scoping meetings Anglers strongly (85%) support removing the limits on Smallmouth Bass in the Snake River. In addition, one of the most common general comments the Department received (15 comments) was to apply this rule (or something similar) in all anadromous waters. Because of large public support we propose to remove size, bag and possession limits on Smallmouth Bass. Public support for more restrictive rules on Tiger Trout at Deer Creek was high (79%), as was support for extending seasons on Fish Lake and Lake Creek (78%).

Southwest Region

No significant public input was provided during scoping meetings. There was one individual that requested additional and local walleye fishing opportunity. No regulation change proposals were developed from scoping input.

Magic Valley

Silver Creek catch-and-release: During public scoping meetings anglers requested an extension to the winter catch-and-release season on Silver Creek, citing a March hatch that is always missed. Staff also support additional early spring fishing so that angling activity can serve as a deterrent to pelican use on Silver Creek. Staff received requests for restrictions on catfish harvest on Dog Creek Reservoir, and management for larger bass in Carey Lake. However, regional staff lack adequate information at this time to justify rule changes, and no proposals were advanced for these waters.

Southeast Region

Snake River (American Falls to Gem Dam): During public scoping anglers expressed concern about overharvest of trout in the Snake River and recommended reducing the bag limit to two trout. Use above the reservoir has increased. Drift boats are increasing and the access parking lots are filling to capacity during peak angling periods. Reducing the bag above the reservoir may have some impact on angling success. The limited sampling data we have suggests trout densities are lower above the reservoir. Because of angler input and from biological sampling we propose a 2 trout limit on this section of the Snake River. The region also was petitioned to reduce trout limits at Blackfoot Reservoir. Staff spent time with the petitioners and other publics to describe recent stocking increases and improved reservoir conditions which should improve trout fishing without more restrictive harvest rules. No Blackfoot Reservoir proposals were advanced for this rules cycle.

Upper Snake

During public scoping, anglers expressed an interest to either restrict fishing opportunity or expand fishing opportunity at Henrys Lake. A majority of anglers surveyed responded positively to extending the fishing season on Henrys Lake. Opposition was expressed from the board members of the Henrys Lake Foundation. Subsequent to the scoping period, standard trend sampling showed lower than expected abundance of trout in Henrys, and low angler catch rates during the early weeks of the 2018 season. Based on uncertainty over the cause of this decline, staff did not advance a proposal to extend the fishing season at this time.

Salmon Region

No significant public input was provided during scoping meetings.