

Meeting Date: March 13, 2019

Agenda Item No. 5-A

Agenda Item: Season Setting, Spring Chinook Salmon Fisheries

Bureau Chief Approval: 

Prepared by: Lance Hebdon, Anadromous Fish Manager

Background:

This agenda item concerns the setting of Chinook salmon fishing seasons targeting hatchery Chinook salmon in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, and South Fork Clearwater River. Fisheries staff will brief the Commission on the pre-season forecasts for Snake River spring and summer Chinook salmon returns for 2019 and propose salmon seasons based on the pre-season forecast and public input. Though the 2019 run is expected to be small relative to the 20-year average, staff forecasts a sufficient number of hatchery salmon returning to the Snake River basin in 2019 to provide sport fisheries that target the non-tribal harvestable share after hatchery production and brood stock targets are considered.

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 2019 spring season Chinook salmon fisheries were held during February in McCall, Lewiston, Orofino, and Riggins. Idaho Department of Fish and Game Regional staffs hosted each of the meetings to provide information on 2019 projected salmon returns and to allow for public comment on potential 2019 seasons.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed 2019 fishing seasons for Chinook salmon in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, and South Fork Clearwater River.

NOTE: At the time of preparation of this gold sheet, Regional and Bureau fisheries staffs were in the process of updating salmon return forecasts and scoping fishery options. The specific fishery proposals were not completed are not included here but will be presented during the March Commission meeting.

Justification:

Salmon and 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 fish for returning adult hatchery Chinook salmon produced at Idaho mitigation hatcheries.