

Gillnetters get continued access to main Columbia channel

Decision puts Oregon at odds with Washington

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Bureau

SALEM — By a tight 4-3 vote, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission veered away from an outright ban on gillnetting in the main channel of the lower Columbia River and set the state at odds with neighboring Washington on how to manage protected salmon and steelhead.

The commission heard more than six hours of staff reports and strikingly discordant testimony from commercial gillnetters and recreational anglers, who have argued for years over who gets to catch how much of seasonal salmon runs, and what methods they may use.

On Friday, the commercial fishery won the day, their case made by a parade of gritty Astoria gillnetters who spoke of generational ties, community businesses and family fortunes at risk if they were no longer able to make a living.

The ODFW commission had previously appeared more likely to continue phasing out gillnets in the river's main channel, a move long favored by the sports fleet, the recreational anglers and guides who hit the river with line and hook. Washington and Oregon agreed to such a plan, set in motion in 2012 by then Gov. John Kitzhaber.

Instead, the commissioners approved an "enhanced" rebalancing plan, one of six options analyzed by ODFW staff. Highlights of the plan include:

- Recreational anglers are allowed to account for 80 percent of the spring and summer Chinook, the wild fish protected under the Endangered Species Act. Commercial anglers will get 20 percent of what is called the "ESA impact" and will be allowed to fish the main stem with tangle nets.
- The harvest of fall



Courtesy Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Gillnetters fish the Columbia River. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission Friday backed off a plan to ban gillnetting in the main channel of the lower Columbia River.

Chinook would be split 66 percent recreational, 34 percent commercial, with main stem gillnetting allowed in Zones 4 and 5 and Coho tangle nets in Zones 1, 2 and 3.

• Anglers can use barbed hooks in the Willamette River.

• The Youngs Bay control zone will continue to be closed to sports fishing.

Gillnetters had offered their own plan that would have given them a greater share of salmon. Steve Fick, owner of Fishhawk Fisheries in Astoria, said he wasn't disappointed in the commission's action.

"When everybody's a little unhappy, it's probably a reasonable decision," he said.

Recreational anglers maintain that gillnetting takes fish indiscriminately, with no way to differentiate between wild fish and hatchery fish, for example. They argue that gillnetting should be relegated to the river's side channels and say the sports fleet has a much bigger economic impact.

"We fill the hotels to bursting in Astoria," said Liz Hamilton, executive director of the Northwest Sports-fishing Industry Association.

During Friday's hearing, recreational anglers the commission shouldn't vary from the path set by Kitzhaber and the "concurrent management" agreement between Oregon and Washington. "A deal is a deal," one man testified.

Earlier this month, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to remove gillnetting from the main channel in two years and increasing recreational anglers' share of fall, spring and summer chinook.

The Washington commission also directed the wildlife department to "aggressively pursue" a buyback program for commercial gill net licenses.

Oregon chose a different route. Fick, of Fishhawk Fisheries, shrugged off the split between the states. If necessary, he said, there is technology to "draw and management line down the river" and let each go its own way.

He said commercial fishing is like logging, farming and ranching — a mainstay of economic life in rural areas.

"It's not a dying industry," he said. "You can't start chopping away at people's opportunities."

At least a dozen commercial fisherman testified along those lines Friday. Several said they are sole providers of their families, and need the main stem fishery to make a living.

"Is this the time of our lives to take away jobs from people?" asked William Huntsinger, representing the Port of Astoria. "Commercial fishermen and the ocean are what's going to feed the world."

"I can't afford to get kicked off the main stem," said one man, adding that he is a fifth generation gillnetter with a wife and daughter. "I'm a 40-year-old uneducated man," he said. "What am I going to do?"

Alex Hendricks, a 17-year-old senior at Clatskanie High School, said he is a fourth-generation gillnetter, following his mother, grandfather and great-grandfather.

"I ask you for the opportunity to embrace the heritage the generations before me have created," he said.

BRIEFLY

Flu season hitting hard in Oregon

PORTLAND (AP) — It's not even February, and this flu season has already sent more Oregonians to the hospital than the last one.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that 736 people have been hospitalized with the flu this winter. Only 443 were hospitalized during the last flu season.

The elderly, as usual, have been hit the hardest. They account for about two-thirds of those hospitalized based on numbers collected in the Portland area.

Dr. Ann Thomas, Oregon public health physician, says nearly all of the outbreaks affecting three or more people have been in long-term care facilities.

Public health officials say it's still not too late to get vaccinated. It generally takes two weeks for a shot to take effect.

Groups seek to oppose lawsuit over Oregon rail expansion

PORTLAND (AP) — Three groups are seeking to oppose Union Pacific Railroad's lawsuit involving a proposed rail expansion along the Columbia River Gorge where a crude oil train derailed last June.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility and Columbia Riverkeeper say they want to stop Union Pacific from circumventing laws that protects the Gorge as a national scenic area. They filed a motion Monday to intervene in the case.

Omaha, Nebraska-based Union Pacific earlier this month sued Wasco County, which rejected the railroad's expansion application, and the Columbia River Gorge Commission, which is scheduled appeals of that case.

Union Pacific says federal rules govern railroads, so local restrictions like the ones Wasco County approved don't apply to the project.

The derailment last June sparked a massive fire near Mosier.

Oregon lawmakers consider potential life jacket law

BEND (AP) — Officials have proposed a law that would require river floaters in Oregon to wear life jackets.

The Bulletin reports that current law requires children age 12 and under to wear life jackets while in a boat. Older boaters must carry a life jacket. The rule doesn't apply to unmotorized craft, like inner tubes, air mattresses, pool toys and surfboards.

The Oregon Marine Board has suggested that those who flout the proposed new law should also pay \$30 in fines.

If the proposed law is passed, it would eliminate the distinction between motorized and unmotorized vessels and require people to wear a life jacket on any Oregon river or steam.

Oregon lawmakers have not yet scheduled a hearing on the bill, which will go through the Committee on Transportation policy.

Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Fog in the morning; cloudy, cold	Fog in the a.m.; mostly cloudy	A little morning snow	Mostly cloudy and cold	Cold with variable cloudiness
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
36°	26°	35°	26°	36°
26°	26°	23°	21°	22°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
35°	24°	34°	25°	33°
24°	25°	23°	23°	22°

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
33°	25°
Yesterday	33°
Normals	42°
Records	63° (1935) -20° (1930)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace
Month to date 1.33"
Normal month to date 1.11"
Year to date 1.39"
Last year to date 1.13"
Normal year to date 1.11"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
32°	20°
Yesterday	43°
Normals	43°
Records	60° (1947) -26° (1930)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 1.39"
Normal month to date 0.96"
Year to date 1.39"
Last year to date 0.87"
Normal year to date 0.96"

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Partly sunny today. Rather cloudy tonight; a shower in spots across the north.	Eastern Washington: Areas of freezing fog in the morning; mostly cloudy today.
Eastern and Central Oregon: Cloudy and cold today, except partly sunny near the Cascades; fog across the north.	Cascades: Partly sunny today. Mostly cloudy tonight; a flurry across the north.
Western Washington: Partial sunshine today; patchy fog across the south during the morning.	Northern California: Clouds and sun today; morning snow showers in the interior mountains. Cold tonight.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Wed.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	50	40	pc	49	38	c
Baker City	30	6	c	24	11	c
Bend	36	18	pc	35	20	pc
Brookings	51	36	pc	48	40	c
Burns	27	3	c	22	3	pc
Enterprise	29	13	c	27	15	c
Eugene	49	32	pc	46	35	pc
Heppner	36	23	c	35	23	c
Hermiston	35	24	c	34	25	c
John Day	33	22	c	33	20	pc
Klamath Falls	32	12	pc	31	17	c
La Grande	33	19	c	31	22	c
Meacham	31	19	c	30	21	c
Medford	46	29	pc	44	32	c
Newport	50	39	pc	49	40	pc
North Bend	51	37	pc	51	40	c
Ontario	33	13	c	25	7	pc
Pasco	34	20	c	34	21	c
Pendleton	36	26	c	35	26	c
Portland	43	33	pc	45	29	pc
Redmond	37	20	c	37	20	pc
Salem	48	35	pc	46	33	pc
Spokane	32	24	c	32	24	c
Ukiah	32	18	c	30	18	c
Vancouver	42	34	pc	44	31	pc
Walla Walla	38	25	c	34	25	c
Yakima	34	17	c	33	20	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Wed.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	38	15	pc	41	19	pc
Hong Kong	67	61	pc	71	59	r
Jerusalem	61	49	pc	64	48	c
London	42	31	c	44	29	pc
Mexico City	76	46	pc	76	46	s
Moscow	34	12	sn	15	-4	c
Paris	36	26	pc	33	22	s
Rome	56	38	pc	55	37	s
Seoul	29	12	s	33	14	s
Sydney	99	71	t	78	71	c
Tokyo	44	34	s	48	36	s

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Wednesday
Boardman	WSW 4-8	NE 4-8
Pendleton	WSW 4-8	NW 4-8

UV INDEX TODAY

0 1 1 1 0 0

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.

0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2017

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

Summary: A major storm will affect the Northeast with strong winds, heavy rain and interior snow and ice today. Another storm will spread snow to the northern Rockies and Plains. Showers will dot California.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 83° in McAllen, Texas Low -5° in Bannack, Mont.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Wed.			Today			Wed.			
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	
Albuquerque	41	22	s	38	18	pc	Louisville	51	41	pc	59	35	pc
Atlanta	60	44	s	68	42	pc	Miami	60	52	s	62	35	pc
Atlanta City	43	37	r	51	46	s	Milwaukee	79	58	s	81	65	pc
Baltimore	47	35	r	55	47	s	Minneapolis	42	37	r	44	32	sn
Billings	26	12	c	28	15	pc	Nashville	56	46	s	65	36	pc
Birmingham	61	45	s	65	39	sh	New Orleans	71	58	s	78	49	sh
Boise	32	14	c	29	13	pc	New York City	41	37	r	49	42	pc
Boston	46	37	r	47	38	s	Oklahoma City	70	31	r	49	24	s
Charleston, SC	67	44	s	72	56	s	Omaha	40	28	r	32	21	c
Charleston, WV	49	37	c	63	38	pc	Philadelphia	43	35	r	52	44	s
Chicago	44	37	c	45	31	sh	Portland, ME	55	38	pc	56	39	s
Cleveland	42	38	c	53	37	pc	Providence	47	37	r	49	37	s
Dallas	76	42	s	56	32	s	Raleigh	59	42	r	67	54	s
Denver	34	16	sn	32	16	pc	Rapid City	24	10	pc	24	11	pc
Detroit	44	37	c	49	36	c	Reno	33	14	sn	35	18	pc
El Paso	54	32	s	50	27	s	Sacramento	54	34	pc	54	39	pc
Fairbanks	6	0	pc	16	12	pc	St. Louis	54	45	pc			