

Fish and Wildlife Commission meets in Salem Feb. 7-8

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. — The Oregon Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Commission will meet Feb. 7 and 8 at ODFW Headquarters located at 3406 Cherry Ave NE in Salem, and will set Columbia River spring chinook management objectives, among other business.

Thursday's meeting begins at 9 a.m. while Friday's meeting begins at 8 a.m. and proceeds chronologically through an agenda available online.

Thursday's meeting is a strategic visioning session for Commissioners to look ahead and discuss what issues ODFW needs to address during the next decade.

Commissioners will be joined by ODFW Director Roy Elicker, ODFW staff and Mike Carrier, Governor Kulongoski's natural resource policy director. The public is invited to attend Thursday's meeting, but there will be no opportunity for public testimony.

Friday's meeting begins at 8 a.m. and includes setting 2008 management objectives for the allocation of mainstem Columbia River spring chinook. Last month, the Commission met with its Washington counterpart to discuss spring and summer chinook fisheries, which are co-managed by the two states. After both states' Commissions set management objectives, final season dates and allocations will be decided at the Columbia River Compact hearing in Vancouver, Wash. Feb. 15, 2008. A decision on management objectives for summer chinook fisheries will be made in the future.

Department staff are proposing that the Commission set spring chinook management objectives as follows:

- Allow recreational fishing from I-5 Bridge upstream to Bonneville Dam six-days-per-week through April 30;
- Allow recreational fishing from Bonneville to McNary Dam seven-days-per-week from March 16-May 10;
- Constrain commercial fishing to the area from I-5 Bridge upstream to Beacon Rock;
- Open commercial Select Area fisheries from mid-February through mid-June;
- Allow recreational Willamette River fishing seven-days-per-week.

The Commission is also expected to adopt into rule the application and selection criteria for houndsmen who would serve as agents for ODFW when doing cougar and bear management. Based on public comments received during last month's meeting, eligibility requirements for houndsmen will be tight. For example, individuals will be ineligible if they have been convicted of violating any animal or wildlife protective laws, regardless of when the conviction occurred.

Because Commissioners heard from the public about the agent rules at their January 2008 and October 2007 meetings, no additional public testimony will be taken during Friday's meeting.

The sport-hunting of cougars and bears with dogs is not legal in the state of Oregon under Measure 18, which Oregon voters passed in 1994. Measure 18 explicitly allowed ODFW and its agents to use hounds when implementing bear and cougar management, but did not clearly grant the department authority to designate agents. To clarify the law, the 2007 Oregon Legislative Assembly enacted HB 2971 and the Commission is adopting administrative rules to put the law into practice.

In response to a request from the Oregon Falconers' Association, the Commission will consider new falconry regulations that could allow the limited take of nestlings from the wild for falconry purposes. Peregrine falcons were de-listed from the Oregon Endangered Species Act last year.

Commissioners will choose the winner of the 2008 Oregon Upland Game Bird Art Contest from among five finalists. The winning artwork along with the other submissions will be on display in ODFW's lobby after 1 p.m. Finally, the Commission is expected to adopt regulations for recreational and commercial Columbia River sturgeon and smelt fisheries.

The Commission is the policy-making body for fish and wildlife issues in the state. The seven-member panel meets monthly. Agenda item exhibits may be requested by calling the ODFW Director's Office at 800-720-6339 or 503-947-6044 or downloaded from the web site.

Public testimony will be held Friday morning immediately following the expenditure report. Persons seeking to testify on issues not on the formal agenda may do so by making arrangements with the ODFW Director's Office, at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting, by calling 800-720-6339 or 503-947-6044.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided as needed for individuals requesting assistive hearing devices, sign language interpreters or large-print materials. Individuals needing these types of accommodations may call the ODFW Director's Office at 800-720-6339 or 503-947-6044 at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

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