Marine fishing regulations adopted for 2009

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

CORVALLIS, Ore. â€“ The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission today adopted 2009 regulations for several marine fisheries, approved management plans for three state wildlife areas and received an update on $2.6 million in funding for federal stimulus projects.

The new groundfish regulations include an increase in the recreational daily bag limit for marine fish from six to seven fish. The increased bag limit is based on a favorable stock assessment for black rockfish, the dominant species in the nearshore groundfish fishery that also includes greenling and cabezon.

The Commission decided to allow the retention of Pacific cod in the deep water halibut fishery from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. It also adopted fork length as the approved method of measuring sturgeon and set commercial groundfish harvest limits that mirror federal regulations.

In other business, the commission adopted federal guidelines for commercial sardine fishing and amended state administrative rules governing the industry. In light of declining sardine populations in recent years, the commission approved rules that will suspend the minimum landing requirements and the owner/operator requirement when the federal harvest guideline falls below 100,000 metric tons of sardines. This will give permit holders more business flexibility and make it easier to retain a permit when sardine populations are low.

Commission members adopted long-term management plan for three state wildlife areas â€“ Lower Deschutes in Wasco and Sherman counties, Riverside, near Juntura, Ore., and Bridge Creek, located near Ukiah, Ore. ODFW manages a total of 12 wildlife areas, which provide habitat for fish and wildlife and outdoor recreational opportunities for the public.

Commission members received an update on several capital improvement projects funded through Oregonâ€™s federal stimulus package. ODFW received authorization and approval for 24 projects under the bill, including $2.6 million in funding. The project list includes new storage buildings, heating system replacements, electrical work at four facilities, hatchery pipeline replacements, elevator installation at the Enterprise District Office, and residence replacements at EE Wilson Wildlife Area and Salmon River Hatchery. The list also includes design work of a new office building at the Hatfield Marine Science Center. Target date for completing bid awards is May 1, 2009.

On Thursday, members of the Commission toured the Haggerty Wetland Project, where they saw the largest habitat restoration project in the Willamette Valley. They also visited Thompsonâ€™s Mills, where they received an overview of fish passage and habitat issues associated with the historic mill and Sodom Dam. The last top on their tour was the Oregon Hatchery Research Center in Alsea, where they toured the facilities and reviewed a project aimed at tagging fish with acoustic radio tags to monitor freshwater migration timing

and ocean survival.

The Commission is the policy-making body for fish and wildlife issues in the state. The seven-member panel meets monthly.

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