

ODFWC accepts petition to list Southern Resident killer whales as Endangered

May 18, 2023



The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission accepted a petition to list the Southern Resident killer whale (SRKW) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) as Endangered under the Oregon Endangered Species Act.

Acceptance of the petition initiates the rule-making process that will include an assessment of the biological status of SRKW in Oregon by ODFW and consultation with affected agencies, tribes, organizations, and the public.

An actual decision on listing SRKW will not be made until a future Commission meeting. The petition was made by the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, and Whale and Dolphin Conservation.

SRKW use coastal waters off Oregon, Washington and California and currently number just 73 individuals in three pods. Some key factors behind SRKW's decline are scarcity of prey (primarily Chinook), high levels of contaminants from pollution, disturbance from vessels/sound and inbreeding. This population is already listed on the federal ESA.

On Friday morning during the Director's Report, ODFW staff presented the 2022 Annual Report and discussed a planned review of the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. (The Plan needs to be reviewed every five years; it was last reviewed in 2019.)

Staff will initiate the review in May 2023 and plan to bring any necessary rule changes to the Commission by June 2024. A public workshop with the Commission and other opportunities for public input are planned. Interested members of the public can sign up for Wolf Updates to keep up with the Wolf Plan review process.

Adopted 2023-24 Game Bird Regulations: The summary of changes for next year is: Western Oregon Fall Turkey Season will open on Sept. 1, rather than the second Saturday of October.

A special Beardless Turkey Permit was established allowing the harvest of up to three beardless turkeys in portions of four Wildlife Management Units in Grant County beginning this fall. The cost of the Western Oregon Fee Pheasant permit will increase from \$17 to \$25 to keep up with the cost of stocking pheasants; a \$10 Youth permit will also be available. No changes from last year for migratory game birds; duck seasons will begin on Oct. 14 in both zones with bag limits the same as last year.

Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs: Approved an updated agreement for off-reservation hunting.

Marbled murrelet: Approved Endangered Species Management Plans for ODFW and nine other designated land-owning or land-managing state agencies that can play a role in marbled murrelet conservation. They also directed to staff to continue collaboration with these nine landowner agencies for conservation of the marbled murrelet.

Fish Screening Task Force: Appointed Robert R. Durham of Dufur to fill the vacant seat representing Agriculture.

Pacific halibut seasons: The International Pacific Halibut Commission set this year's fishery catch limit at 1.52 million pounds for Area 2A (Oregon, Washington and Northern California) which is 30,000 pounds higher than last year. For a look at the recreational season visit this map

Ocean salmon seasons: The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) recently adopted ocean salmon fishing regulations for federal-jurisdiction waters from three to 200 nautical miles offshore. The Commission adopted matching permanent regulations for state jurisdiction waters (within three miles offshore). A strong coho run is expected again and recreational fishing will begin along the entire coast in mid-June.

But due to severely low forecasts for Chinook returns to the Klamath and Sacramento Rivers, recreational and commercial fishing for Chinook will be closed south of Cape Falcon until Sept. 1 to protect these fish that are caught along with local Chinook and coho in Oregon's ocean fisheries. See this map for more details on recreational ocean salmon fisheries.