

2019 Washington Fisheries Disaster Spending Plan Proposal

NOTE: Initial ex-vessel value data were based on WDFW fish ticket database as of December 2019. A new data pull should be performed for final calculations for all allocations.

Overview

In 2021, Washington Governor Jay Inslee requested that the Secretary of Commerce declare commercial fishery failures due to a fishery resource disaster for 2019 Washington commercial salmon fisheries in the Columbia River, Willapa Bay and Puget Sound. Ex-vessel value data provided to NOAA during their review of the requests estimated losses for those Washington license holders in each of those fisheries relative to the previous five-year period based on ex-vessel value for landed salmon catch for each fishery. The percentage losses were 84% for the Columbia River, 63% for Willapa Bay and 74% for Puget Sound. In May of 2023, the Secretary notified the Governor that these fisheries met the requirements for a commercial fishery failure under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and were eligible for fishery disaster assistance. NOAA later allocated \$3,764,202 of the \$220 million Congressional fishery disaster appropriation towards the 2019 Washington disasters.

The amount allocated to the 2019 disaster was 66.6% of the estimated ex-vessel value loss for the combined disasters. NOAA recommends that fishery disaster funds be used to strengthen the long-term economic and environmental stability of the affected fisheries, through activities like habitat restoration, research, buybacks or job retraining. The amount of funding available in response to the 2019 Washington disasters is small relative to the amount that would be needed to make meaningful progress through activities like those listed above across the affected fisheries. Because of the limited dollars and limited time available to develop more complex spend plan projects, The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) recommends that the funds be used as direct payments to license owners who were affected financially by the disasters. WDFW has sought input from fishing industry representatives for the affected fisheries while developing this spending plan.

WDFW recommends the available relief funds be divided between fisheries proportionally to the estimated ex-vessel value losses for each fishery.

Table 1. Estimated ex-vessel value loss for 2019 Washington salmon fisheries relative to 2014-2018 average ex-vessel value

Fishery	Estimated ex-vessel loss	Percent of total loss
Columbia River	\$923,974	16.4%
Willapa Bay	\$272,746	4.8%
Puget Sound	\$4,446,760	78.8%
Total	\$5,643,480	100%

Industry representatives have asked if funds can be distributed to alternate operators for licenses that were fished by an alternate operator during the base years and/or the disaster year. While WDFW's licensing database does keep records of designated alternate operators for each license, WDFW's fish ticket database does not keep track of whether the owner or an alternate operator makes each individual landing, only the license number is recorded during data entry. Attributing each landing to an owner or alternate operator would require reviewing hard copies or scanned images of each fish ticket, and WDFW does not have the resources to undertake such an exercise. In addition, WDFW has no way of knowing what contracts or understandings, financial or otherwise, are made when each alternate operator is designated, and therefore has no way to judge the fairness of distributing relief funds to owners versus alternate operators. For these reasons, WDFW recommends that funds be distributed to eligible license owners, as has been done in the past, and encourages owners to share relief funds with alternate operators in an appropriate manner based on their agreements with those operators.

Columbia River

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends that the criteria below be used to distribute funds for the 2019 disaster.

Criteria for Identifying Eligible License Holders

In order to be eligible, License holders must have owned an active Washington Columbia River-Willapa Bay or Columbia River – Grays Harbor Salmon Gillnet License in 2019 and have made at least one salmon delivery in the Columbia River between 2014-2018. Deliveries made in either Washington or Oregon count as long as they are associated with a Washington Columbia River-Willapa Bay or Columbia River- Grays Harbor Salmon Gillnet License.

Catch history belongs to the individual holding the license at the time of the catch. License holders will not be allowed to claim another person's catch unless it is included in a valid contract of sale. No two license holders can claim the same catch history.

Alternate operators will not be eligible to apply for relief, only license owners may apply.

Calculating payments for eligible Columbia River fishers

- All license owners with an active license in 2019 and with at least one delivery during the years 2014-2018 will receive a base payment of \$1,000. Owners with multiple eligible licenses will only receive one base payment for each disaster, one for the Columbia River and one for Willapa Bay.
- In addition to the base payment, license owners with landings in 2014-2018 will receive a payment based on their proportion of the total catch in the fishery during those years (2014-2018). Individual payments will be calculated according to the following formula:

$$\text{Individual payment} = (a/b)*c$$

Where: a = individual's total ex-vessel value for Columbia River gillnet landings from 2014-2018

b = total 2014-2018 ex-vessel value for eligible Columbia River gillnet license holders

c = Total funds available for Columbia River gillnet license holders

Willapa Bay

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends that the criteria below be used to distribute funds for the 2019 disaster.

Criteria for Identifying Eligible License Holders

In order to be eligible, License holders must have owned an active Washington Columbia River-Willapa Bay Salmon Gillnet License in 2019 and have made at least one salmon delivery in Willapa Bay between 2014-2018.

Catch history belongs to the individual holding the license at the time of the catch. License holders will not be allowed to claim another person's catch unless it is included in a valid contract of sale. No two license holders can claim the same catch history.

Alternate operators will not be eligible to apply for relief, only license owners may apply.

Calculating payments for eligible Willapa Bay fishers

- All license owners with an active Columbia River- Willapa Bay Salmon Gillnet License in 2019 and with at least one delivery during the years 2014-2018 will receive a base payment of \$1,000. Owners with multiple eligible licenses will only receive one base payment for each disaster, one for the Columbia River and one for Willapa Bay.
- In addition to the base payment, license owners with landings in 2014-2018 will receive a payment based on their proportion of the total catch in the fishery during those years (2014-2018). Individual payments will be calculated according to the following formula:

$$\text{Individual payment} = (a/b)*c$$

Where: a = individual's total ex-vessel value from 2014-2018

b = total 2014-2018 ex-vessel value for eligible Willapa Bay license holders

c = Total funds available for Willapa Bay license holders

Puget Sound

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends that the criteria below be used to distribute funds for the 2019 disaster. These criteria were developed using templates for past Fraser River disasters, updated to account for the multi-species nature of the 2019 disaster, and based on input from industry representatives specific to the 2019 disaster:

Identify Eligible License Holders

1. In order to be eligible for the relief program, individuals must have owned a Puget Sound Purse Seine (PS), Puget Sound Gill Net (GN), or Puget Sound Reef Net (RN) License during some portion of the 2019 commercial season (July – November).
2. Catch history belongs to the individual holding the license at the time of the catch. License holders will not be allowed to claim another person's catch unless it is included in a valid contract of sale. No two license holders can claim the same catch history. Within these restrictions, license holders who sold a license with catch history may be able to use that catch history in the following situations:
 - a. If a license holder sold a license with qualifying catch history prior to June 30, 2019, but purchased another license that provided the option to participate in the 2019 Puget Sound fishery, their catch history from the license sold can be used in determining their eligibility for this program.
 - b. If a license holder owned multiple licenses during the base period, but sold one of those licenses prior to June 30, 2019, the catch history from the license sold can be used in determining eligibility for this program under the retained license. If the license holder had catch history on the license sold and on the license retained, either history can be used in determining eligibility, but they cannot be combined.

Calculate Allocations by Gear Group

Funds for the 2019 Puget Sound commercial salmon disaster will be allocated between license types (gill net, purse seine and reef net) in the same proportions as the average ex-vessel value between license types for the 5 years prior to the disaster (2014-2018).

Puget Sound beach seine fisheries are designated as an emerging commercial fishery, and potential eligibility for disaster relief is unclear. Beach seine fisheries are licensed/permitted through a different process than other Puget Sound commercial salmon licenses, although a limited entry Puget Sound commercial salmon license is required to participate in the beach seine fishery. Regardless of eligibility of an emerging commercial fishery for disaster funding, economic analysis of the beach seine fishery shows that it did not meet the disaster requirements, in fact ex-vessel value exceeded the average for the five-year period prior to the disaster, so disaster funding will not be allocated for this gear type.

Table X. Puget Sound salmon total ex-vessel values and average & by gear type 2014-2019

YEAR	GILL NET	PURSE SEINE	REEF NET	TOTAL
2014	\$ 1,585,116	\$ 4,806,283	\$ 145,320	\$ 6,536,719
2015	\$ 1,029,045	\$ 2,412,706	\$ 124,306	\$ 3,566,057
2016	\$ 1,381,993	\$ 2,316,232	\$ 31,298	\$ 3,729,524
2017	\$ 1,891,778	\$ 5,302,752	\$ 102,352	\$ 7,296,882
2018	\$ 2,119,823	\$ 5,601,597	\$ 603,501	\$ 8,324,921
Grand Total	\$ 8,007,756	\$ 20,439,571	\$ 1,006,777	\$ 29,454,103
2014-19 Average %	27.2%	69.4%	3.4%	100.0%

Calculate Shares by individual license holder

1. Distribute funds to all eligible 2019 license owners by the following methods:

Gillnet: To be eligible, gillnet license owners must have made at least one landing during the base period years of 2014-2018. Funds available to gillnet license holders will be divided equally among eligible gillnet license holders.

Reefnet: To be eligible, license owners must have made at least one landing on their license in 2016, 2017 or 2018. Licenses without at least one landing in one of those three years will not be eligible. Funds allocated to reefnet licenses will be divided equally among all eligible reefnet licenses.

Purse Seine: To be eligible, a purse seine license owner must have made at least one landing on their license in 2019. All eligible purse seine license owners will receive a base payment of \$1,000. Owners with multiple eligible purse seine licenses will only receive one \$1,000 base payment for the 2019 disaster. In addition to that base payment, the license owner will receive a payment based on their proportion of total purse seine catch during the 2014-2018 base period, calculated according to the following formula:

$$\text{Individual payment} = (a/b)*c$$

Where: a = individual's total ex-vessel value from 2014-2018

b = total 2014-2018 ex-vessel value for eligible purse seine license owners

c = Total funds available for purse seine license owners after base payments