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Washington Department of
FISH & WILDLIFE

WDFW closes recreational fishing statewide in wake of governor's order to 'Stay Home, Stay Healthy' in response to COVID-19

ARCHIVED NEWS RELEASE

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News release *March 25, 2020*

Fish Program, 360-902-2700

OLYMPIA – The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) today announced its decision to temporarily close recreational fishing and shellfishing statewide in the wake of Washington Gov. Jay Inslee's order directing Washingtonians to stay home and stay healthy to limit the spread of coronavirus/COVID-19.

The closures will begin at midnight Wednesday, March 25 and last until at least 5 p.m. on April 8, 2020. WDFW will re-evaluate on April 6 whether the closure may need to be extended.

"This is not a decision we take lightly, but it's the right thing to do for the health and well-being of Washington's families," said



Photo by WDFW

Last weekend public lands and sites saw a surge in use putting nature-seekers in overly close proximity, such as in this case where people fished shoulder-to-shoulder on the Tucannon lakes on the Wooten Wildlife Area.

WDFW Director Kelly Sussewind. "Monday's extraordinary order for the residents of our state to stay home requires all of us to work together to ensure these measures have the intended effect."

Fishery managers have reported that some anglers have been seen crowding banks as concerns over coronavirus have continued.

"We've seen an uptick in outdoor recreation at some locations in recent weeks as people have looked for ways to get outside," said WDFW Fish Program Director Kelly Cunningham. "We've had reports of crowded boat ramps and busy fishing on some rivers, which runs counter to the governor's direction to stay home and practice social distancing."

In addition, many salmon and steelhead fisheries require regular monitoring under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which includes conducting angler interviews at access sites surrounding the state's marine waters. The on-site, face-to-face nature of angler interviews puts people at potential risk of transmitting the coronavirus. Without such monitoring, these recreational fisheries must close to ensure ESA protections.

WDFW and other state agencies previously closed all of their water access sites, including boat launches, and other public lands where people may gather. Local and tribal governments are taking similar actions across Washington.

WDFW Enforcement officers remain on duty and will be enforcing these new closures.

The lowland lakes opening day for trout remains scheduled for April 25, but will be evaluated depending on whether the governor's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order might be further extended.

For the latest updates on WDFW's coronavirus response, please visit <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/covid-19-updates> (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/covid-19-updates>). Updates to openings and closures will be posted to that page. For the latest information on the statewide response to this pandemic, visit <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/>.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is the state agency tasked with preserving, protecting, and perpetuating fish, wildlife, and ecosystems, while providing sustainable fishing, hunting, and other recreation opportunities.

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