

# Willard National Hatchery Fishing Plan

June 2020

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Willard National Fish Hatchery  
5501B Cook-Underwood Road  
Cook, Washington 98605

Submitted By:  
Project Leader

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# WILLARD NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY FISHING PLAN

## **I. Introduction**

National Fish Hatcheries are guided by the goals and objectives of the *Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020* (USFWS 2016), the mission and goals of the National Fish Hatchery (NFH) System, the authorized purposes of an individual hatchery, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy, laws and international treaties.

The hatchery is located on the Little White Salmon River 12 miles East and 5.5 miles North of Stevenson, Washington on the Cook-Underwood Road.

The facility was established in 1952 under the authorization of the Mitchell Act (16 USC 755-757; 52 Stat. 345) for mitigation of Bonneville Dam on Pacific salmon. Construction of the Willard NFH began in 1951. Because the hatchery is located above an impassable natural waterfall, migrating adult salmon are collected and spawned at Little White Salmon NFH and eggs shipped to Willard NFH to initiate fish production. Co-located with the former Western Fish Nutrition Laboratory, this fish culture station was responsible for making significant early advances in fish nutrition. The laboratory building is now occupied by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Columbia River Research Laboratory, a substation of the Western Fisheries Research Center, Seattle, WA.

Willard NFH is located on the Little White Salmon River approximately 5 miles upstream from Drano Lake and the Little White Salmon NFH, just off the Columbia River. The Willard hatchery includes 80.10 acres of land purchased by the Service, and an additional 3.70 acres acquired by agreement, easement, or lease. In addition, three government residences are located adjacent to the hatchery on Coho Loop.

National Fish Hatchery lands are maintained for the fundamental purpose of propagating and distributing fish and other aquatic animal life and managed for the protection of all species of wildlife (50 CFR Ch.1 70.1).

Willard NFH has provided public access to fishing opportunities since its establishment in 1952 and long before current environmental policies and regulations were promulgated. This document serves to retroactively and officially open designated portions of Willard NFH lands to public fishing via the Code of Federal Regulations. These actions will ensure that all legal and policy obligations are met.

Recreational fishing is a popular sport on Little White Salmon River. Anglers fish from the banks of the Little White Salmon River, especially on the upper accessible stretches along the

Oklahoma Road, where the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) stocks rainbow trout. The fish stocked in that area often drift downstream and into pools adjacent to Service-owned lands. There are several pullouts at the Cook-Underwood Bridge over the Little White Salmon River that provide parking opportunities for anglers. These parking areas also service kayakers that utilize the Little White Salmon River mainly during the period from late winter through late spring as water flows permit.

The WDFW is the state's principal steward of fish and wildlife resources. State law directs the Department to conserve native fish and wildlife and their habitat, while also supporting sustainable fishing, hunting and other outdoor opportunities for millions of Washington residents and visitors. In 2017, WDFW completed its 2017-2019 Strategic Plan (WDFW 2017). The Service's authorization of fishing at the Willard NFH is in compliance and consistent with WDFW's strategic plan. For fish species such as Pacific salmon and white sturgeon, WDFW works closely with state and Federal agencies to set regulations that protect native species and allow for equitable harvest opportunities. The Department is committed to providing sustainable fishing opportunities throughout the state. Popular outdoor activities like fishing are a "quality of life" issue for millions of Washingtonians, and generate billions of dollars in economic benefits for local businesses and communities each year. Their plan is designed to maintain and increase those benefits with strategies that range from better access to better catch accounting.

## **II. Statement of Objectives**

The objective of this plan is to ensure that the federally-owned lands within the Willard NFH are made available to the public for fishing opportunities. This plan will take into account operational requirements that restrict access to certain areas of the property and the fact that not all of the property lends itself to fishing opportunities. The main contribution to fishing access provided by the hatchery is through Service-owned lands downstream of the Cook-Underwood Bridge. The Service owns approximately 10.5 acres of forested accessible land on the southeast side of Cook-Underwood Road. This land provides access to approximately 600 feet of shoreline on the northwest bank of the Little White Salmon River starting approximately 1,400 feet downriver of the Cook-Underwood Bridge. (Figure 1). Access to the river upstream of the Cook-Underwood Bridge across Service-owned land is restricted due to infrastructure, safety, and operational needs.

### **Fishing Plan Goals**

*Goal 1: Fishing, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor activities are enhanced and expanded.* The Service strives to complement WDFW's goals which seek to preserve, protect and perpetuate fish and ecosystems while providing sustainable recreational and commercial fishing opportunities. These latter opportunities are enhanced via increased and improved access.

*Goal 2: Increase angling participation.* Diverse, stable and productive angling opportunities are the basis for increased angling participation. The Service strives to follow WDFW's objective of

providing hatcheries and other public access sites that are safe, clean, and effectively support people's use and enjoyment of natural resources.

### **Fishing Plan Objective**

The objective of a fishing program at Willard NFH is to provide opportunities for visitors to fish from hatchery lands in accordance with the Service's Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program Strategic Goals, WDFW Strategic Plan Goals, and WDFW fishing regulations.

The program will:

- Include clear and concise regulations that are readily available to visitors on the hatchery website;
- Pose minimal conflict with overall fish and habitat objectives;
- Pose minimal conflict with other priority public use activities; and
- Provide a quality fishing program that provides opportunities for visitors to fish on hatchery lands.

### **Fishing Plan Strategies:**

- a. To allow anglers access to about 600 feet of bank fishing along the west bank of the Little White Salmon River approximately 1,400 feet downstream of the Cook-Underwood Bridge.

## **III. Description of Fishing Program**

### **A. Areas to be Opened to Fishing**

Bank fishing access will be allowed through and on Service property southeast of the Cook-Underwood Road, which includes approximately 600 feet of shoreline on the northwest bank of the Little White Salmon River (Figure 1).



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
**Willard National Fish Hatchery**  
 Skamania County, Washington

Land Status

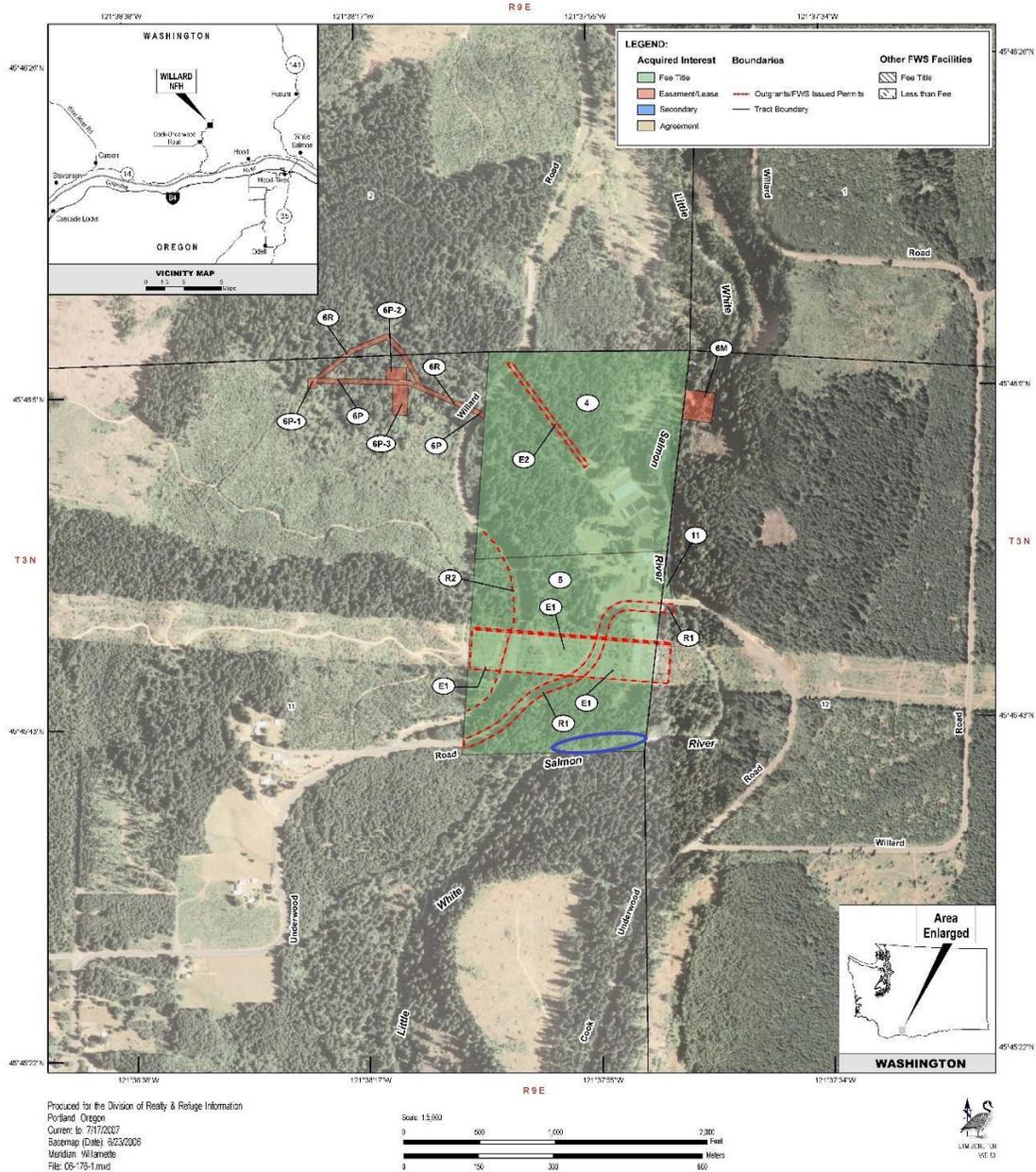


Figure 1. Aerial view of Willard NFH.

## **B. Species to be Taken, Fishing Periods, Fishing Access**

Anglers are required to comply with species and take limits within WDFW fishing regulations. The areas will be open for anglers to access year-round.

## **C. Fishing Permit Requirements**

Anglers who are eligible to fish under Washington State law are eligible to fish on hatchery units. They must obtain a Washington State fishing license and follow Washington State laws, limits, and regulations.

## **D. Consultation and Coordination with the State**

Consultation and coordination of this Fishing Plan was initiated with WDFW and Yakima Nation on December 19, 2019 (Appendix A). To date neither entity has provided any comments.

## **E. Law Enforcement**

Enforcement of hatchery regulations normally associated with management of NFH System properties is the responsibility of commissioned Federal Wildlife Officers. Other officers, Special Agents, state game wardens, and the local Sheriff's Department may assist Federal Wildlife Officers.

The following methods are used to control and enforce fishing regulations:

- Hatchery and fishing area boundaries will be clearly posted;
- The hatchery will provide a brochure that shows fishing areas; and
- Federal law enforcement staff will randomly check anglers for compliance with Federal and state laws.

The hatchery will post fishing regulations on the hatchery website, hatchery information kiosks, and in hatchery offices.

## **F. Funding and Staffing Requirements**

There will be little costs associated with the development of infrastructure to support fishing opportunities at the Willard NFH.

## **IV. Conduct of the Fishing Program**

### **A. Fishing Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures**

No special application or registration process is required. Anglers must possess a current State

of Washington fishing license.

### **B. Hatchery-Specific Fishing Regulations**

Listed below are hatchery-specific regulations that pertain to fishing on Willard NFH as of the date of this plan. These regulations may be modified as conditions change or if hatchery lands expand.

Sport Fishing. We allow fishing on designated areas of the hatchery in accordance with state regulations. The hatchery facilities upstream and on the north side of Cook-Underwood Road are closed from 4p.m. – 7:30 a.m. Fishing at night is currently permitted, but this could change in the future.

### **C. Relevant State Regulations**

Refer to WDFW’s “Sport Fishing Rules” for specific fishing regulations, as these may change often.

### **D. Other Hatchery Rules and Regulations for Fishing**

- Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
- Fishing on hatchery lands as described within is allowed seven days per week
- Pets are welcome, but must be on a leash at all times.

## **V. Public Engagement**

### **A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Fishing Program**

The Hatchery maintains a mailing list, for news release purposes, to local newspapers, radio, and websites. Special announcements and articles may be released in conjunction with fishing seasons. In addition, information about fishing will be available at Willard NFH

### **B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Fishing Program**

No public reaction would be anticipated to opening up fishing access. Fishing access has been available to the public for many years, though not advertised, and no significant changes are planned.

### **C. How Anglers Will Be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations**

General information regarding fishing can be obtained at the Willard NFH, 5501-B Cook-

Underwood Rd, Cook, Washington 98605. The 2020 Washington State Sport fishing Regulations can be found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations>.

## **VI. References**

USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). 2016. Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020. Falls Church, VA.

WDFW (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife). 2017. 2017-19 Strategic Plan. Olympia, WA.

**APPENDIX A**

**Coordination with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Yakima Nation**

Sinclair, Thomas &lt;thomas\_sinclair@fws.gov&gt;



## Yakama Nation and WDFW Review of Draft USFWS Willard NFH Fishing Plan

1 message

**Wingert, Steve** <steve\_wingert@fws.gov>

Thu, Dec 19, 2019 at 10:48 AM

To: Tom Scribner &lt;scrt@yakamafish-nsn.gov&gt;, Joe Zendt &lt;jzendt@ykfp.org&gt;, Jeffery.wickersham@dfw.wa.gov, Matthew.Gardner@dfw.wa.gov

Cc: Thomas Sinclair &lt;thomas\_sinclair@fws.gov&gt;, "Clark, Michael" &lt;michael\_l\_clark@fws.gov&gt;, "Lienesch, Laila" &lt;laila\_lienesch@fws.gov&gt;

Good morning,

the USFWS, Willard NFH is in the process of identifying hatchery lands adjacent to waters of the Little White Salmon River that provide access to the public for fishing. These waters have always been open to the public so there is no real change, we are just formally codifying the access. Please find a draft plan attached. Let us know if you have any comments or edits to the documents. Please just go ahead and make any changes in track changes.

Thanks,  
Steve Wingert

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Steve D. Wingert  
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Cook, WA 98605  
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**Willard NFH Draft Final Fishing Plan\_2020.docx**

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