

2009 Washington State Legislature Successes Spearheaded by the Washington Council of Trout Unlimited  
by Ric Abbett

The 2009 legislative session was dominated by budget issues due to the ongoing economic crisis. Facing cuts of \$31 million dollars, the WDFW was prepared to lay off 160 people from their jobs and make drastic reductions in programs and hatchery production. Working with key budget writers in both parties, the Washington Council of Trout Unlimited spearheaded efforts to fill budget holes with creative measures to increase revenue.

**SSB 5421, The Columbia River Recreational Salmon and Steelhead Pilot Stamp Program**, signed into law May 8, 2009, was sponsored by Senator Linda Evans Parlette. It was the culmination of over a years worth of work by the Icicle Valley Chapter in building community support for a novel approach to providing fishing opportunity in their local area of the Upper Columbia River.

The idea was embraced by state fisheries managers and expanded to include the lower reaches all the way to Astoria. The goal of the pilot project is to continue and, if possible, expand selective recreational fishing opportunities on the Columbia River and its tributaries. The improvement of fishing opportunities will be done by supplementing resources available to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for scientific monitoring, data collection, permitting, enforcement, and other activities necessary to accomplish the pilot project's goals.

The non-appropriated Columbia River Recreational Salmon and Steelhead Pilot Stamp Program Account) was created as a source of funding for the WDFW to administer the pilot project. The Account is primarily funded through an additional fee of \$7.50 that must be paid by any person over the age of 15 that is participating in a recreational salmon or steelhead fishery on the Columbia River or one of its tributaries.

The affected fisheries are those located on the Columbia River from the Chief Joseph Dam to a line in the river drawn from Washington's Rocky Point to Oregon's Tongue Point.

By September 1, 2009, WDFW must develop a list of tributaries to the Columbia where a stamp is required to fish recreationally and must determine whether it will issue stamps or endorsements.

The WDFW must consult with an advisory board comprised of recreational salmon and steelhead anglers in regards to the administration of the pilot project. The WDFW must name between six and ten people to the advisory board and must give consideration to nominees from recognized recreational fishing organizations located near the Columbia River and seek to create equitable geographic representation. The Director of the WDFW must seek to reach consensus with the advisory board on all expenditures from the Account and provide advisory board members with written explanations of each expenditure from the Account that is divergent from the advisory board's recommendations, enforcement, and other activities necessary to accomplish the pilot project's goals.

**HB 1778, Modifying various provisions of Title 77 RCW**, began with a proposal for two poles on lowland lakes for a fee.

Senator Dan Swecker met with WCTU, tribes and state officials, resulting in a proposal creating a \$20 fee for most anglers and a \$5 fee for state residents over the age of 69, to allow for an additional rod to fund hatchery production to eliminate cuts and some closures of facilities.

HB 1778 became an omnibus bill in the Senate and eventually the vehicle for an amendment to create a surcharge for licenses. There is no additional surcharge fee on the Columbia River stamp.

"The 10 percent surcharge on hunting and fishing licenses and an endorsement stamp for anglers in the Columbia River Basin will bring in about \$10 million" said Phil Anderson, acting Fish and Wildlife director.

In the culmination of another effort by WCTU with the Ballast Water Work Group, a provision was included on aquatic invasive species so that the WDFW enforcement division may provide aquatic invasive species instruction training to other local law enforcement.

Also, a person entering Washington while transporting watercraft must have in their possession documentation that the watercraft has been inspected and found free of aquatic invasive species. The cost of impounding, transporting, cleaning, and decontaminating watercraft that is contaminated with aquatic invasive species will be paid by the person in possession of the watercraft when it is inspected.