Fish Management Plan
Mount Rainier National Park

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: **Why is the NPS approving this plan?**
The purpose of the fish management plan is to conserve native fish populations and restore aquatic ecosystems by reducing or eliminating nonnative fish. Nonnative fish can compete with native fish for food and habitat and prey on aquatic species, including native fish and amphibians. Eradication or suppression of nonnative fish is expected to result in the increased survival and abundance of threatened and endangered species populations (bull trout, chinook salmon and steelhead) and improved habitat.

Q: **Where will fish be removed?**
The park has identified 10 subalpine lakes where nonnative fish management efforts will be the most feasible and beneficial to aquatic ecosystems, including the threatened bull trout. Lakes in the park were originally fishless before the introduction of nonnative fish species occurred. Populations of nonnative brook trout in streams and rivers in the Carbon River watershed will also be reduced or eliminated.

Q: **How will you remove nonnative fish populations?**
Recreational fishing opportunities will be expanded through revised fishing regulations to allow unlimited take of nonnative fish. In addition, the NPS will use mechanical methods such as gillnetting, seining, and electrofishing to remove or suppress nonnative fish in the selected locations. In the 10 selected lakes, gillnetting will continue for up to five years, unless infeasible, after which the NPS will use monitoring data to determine whether to continue gillnetting or to use piscicides. Piscicides will not be used in streams or rivers.

Q: **What fish are targeted for removal in this plan?**
Actions primarily focus on removal of nonnative brook trout populations in lakes, streams, and rivers. In addition, the plan calls for removal of nonnative rainbow trout in Tipsoo Lake, which is closed to fishing due to shoreline vegetation impacts, and removal of nonnative cutthroat trout in a lake located in Bear Park due to its amphibian habitat and the feasibility of removal.

Q: **What and where are the 10 lakes?**
The 10 lakes targeted for nonnative fish removal are located in the White, Puyallup, Huckleberry, Mowich, and Ohanapecosh watersheds. They include Tipsoo Lake, the White River Ponds (3 lakes), the Littorals Pond, Bear Park Lake, Golden Lakes (2 lakes), and 2 unnamed lakes.

Q: **How will you reduce risks of piscicide use on the environment and to the public from fish consumption?**
If piscicides are used in lakes, downstream impacts will be mitigated by the use of neutralizing chemicals (potassium permanganate). Potassium permanganate quickly reacts with a variety of piscicides, reducing concentrations to levels that are not harmful to aquatic or terrestrial organisms. Both piscicides and neutralizing chemicals would diminish quickly.

Q: **What changes in fishing opportunities are expected under this plan?**
Changes in fishing regulations allow for a range of increased fishing opportunities in lakes including no limits for fish caught and no seasonal restrictions. Fishing regulation changes in streams and rivers include catch and release of all native fish, retention of brook trout, and the use of single point barbless hooks. The artificial fly fishing-only restriction on the Ohanapecosh River and its tributaries would be removed while Fryingpan Creek would be closed to fishing to protect the threatened bull trout. Additionally, a citizen science angling program to aid with removal of nonnative brook trout in the Carbon River watershed will be developed. Over time, if the plan is successful in removing nonnative fish, we expect that fishing opportunities in nine lakes will be eliminated (i.e., Tipsoo Lake currently prohibits fishing).

Q: **What are the proposed changes in the park's fishing regulations?**
Fishing regulation changes are intended to reduce populations of nonnative fish through expanded recreational fishing opportunities and to support native fish population management in the park while providing for a range of fishing opportunities. A summary of changes are found in Table 1. The primary components of the park's fishing regulations will include:

- Fishing season for streams and rivers will begin the first Saturday in June and extend through October 31, with the exception of Mowich, Carbon, West Fork, White and Huckleberry Creek, which will be closed after Labor Day to protect spawning bull trout.
- Single point barbless hooks in streams and rivers.
- No fishing in Fryingpan Creek above the confluence of the White River to protect bull trout.
- Catch and release of all native fish (streams and rivers throughout the park).
- Retention of brook trout throughout the park, and kokanee retention from the Nisqually watershed.
- No use of lead weights.

Other changes applicable only to lakes include:

- No seasonal restrictions and spawning fish may be taken.
- No catch limits for fish caught.
- Retention of all species caught.

The park may issue fishing regulation changes through a Superintendent's order while pursuing a permanent rule change.

Q: **When will implementation of the Fish Management Plan begin?**
Implementation of the Fish Management Plan will be phased over multiple years, beginning with the revision of the fishing regulations and development of a fishing guide over the 2018-2019 winter. Fishing regulations will be in place by the summer of 2019. Planning efforts to remove nonnative fish will begin in 2019, with field work expected to start in 2020 focused on nonnative brook trout removal in the Carbon River watershed, and the first 3 prioritized lakes identified for nonnative brook trout removal.

Q: **How long will this effort take?**
The plan was developed with an anticipated 10-year implementation timeframe.

Q: **How will revised fishing regulations be more consistent with NPS and Washington State, policy?**
Current park-specific federal fishing regulations do not align with US Fish and Wildlife Service and NPS goals for native fish species management and recovery. For example, the current regulations provide little to no protection for native fish, including threatened and endangered species. New fishing regulations require catch and release of all native species.

Q: **How does the plan affect wilderness character?**
Eight of the ten proposed treatment lakes are in wilderness; however it is likely only one lake would be treated at a time. Fish removal activities would temporarily impact the undeveloped and untrammeled quality of wilderness. However, successful nonnative fish removal is expected to result in a return to more natural conditions at treated lakes and streams in Wilderness.

Q: **Why is the NPS not targeting all of the lakes with reproducing fish populations for fish removal?**
Fish removal lakes were targeted to:

- Reduce or eradicate nonnative brook trout in bull trout critical habitat, beginning with headwaters' source populations.
- Eradicate introduced fish in lakes where it is most feasible and likely to succeed.
- Eradicate introduced fish in lakes to improve opportunities for native amphibian survival and persistence.

Removal of reproducing fish populations in all lakes would require the use of piscicides due habitat complexity, and require additional funding and staff to implement actions over the course of 10 years.

Q: **Why is the NPS not reintroducing bull trout and salmonids to other park waters?**
An intensive planning effort would be required to evaluate the potential translocation of bull trout into the Puyallup and Mowich watershed, combined with potential reintroduction of steelhead, Chinook, and Coho salmon where these are documented to have been extirpated from suitable habitat. This action requires a separate planning effort.

Q: **How has the public been involved in developing this plan?**
At the start of the planning process the public was asked to help "scope" or identify issues and concerns to address in the plan, and provide feedback on the 3 proposed alternatives. Preliminary Alternatives were available for a 30 day public comment period. The Plan and Environmental Assessment was available for a 30 day public review and comment period.

Q: **How many comments did the National Park Service receive from the public?**
The NPS received 26 comments during public scoping on the alternatives prior to the publication of the EA. The NPS received 13 comments on the EA. All those who commented on the EA were supportive of action Alternatives 2 or 3.

Q: **How have Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service, tribes and angling groups been involved with developing this plan?**
Consultation with WDFW, USFWS, tribes and anglers has been essential in the development of this plan. Under the plan, all would be partners in its implementation. During development of the revised fishing regulations, the NPS met with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to

review proposed revisions. Fish Biologists from the US Fish and Wildlife Service provided comments during the development of the Plan and Environmental Assessment. An overview of the proposed plan was presented at several meetings, including a Tribal meeting hosted at Mount Rainier National Park, and a local high lake angling club meeting in Seattle. The NPS looks forward to continuing to work with a variety of partners in implementing the plan.

Q: **How can someone volunteer to assist in fish removal efforts?**
We welcome having volunteers help. For a list of available opportunities, contact Aquatic Ecologist Rebecca Lofgren via email rebecca_a_lofgren@nps.gov.

Table 1. Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes at Mount Rainier National Park

Subject	**Current 36 CFR 7.5 Mount Rainier National Park (a) Fishing and Superintendent's Compendium**	**Proposed 36 CFR 7.5 Mount Rainier National Park (a) Fishing**
Closed to fishing	● Klickitat Creek above the White River Entrance ● Laughing Water Creek above the Ohanapecosh water supply intake ● Frozen Lake ● Ipsut Creek above the Ipsut Creek Campground water supply intake ● Ghost Lake (Superintendent's Compendium) ● Edith Creek Basin above the Paradise water supply (Superintendent's Compendium)	● All waters ways upstream of water supply intakes are closed to fishing (Superintendent's Compendium will specify which waterways). ● Removal of restriction on Ipsut Creek –water supply is now a well system ● No fishing in Fryingpan Creek above the confluence of the White River to protect threatened bull trout.
Fishing season - rivers and streams	Defers to State Regulations: currently Saturday before Memorial Day through October 31.	First Saturday in June through October 31, except Mowich, Carbon West Fork, White and Huckleberry Creek would be closed after Labor Day to protect spawning bull trout.
Fishing season – lakes (all nonnative species)	Defers to State Regulations: currently year-round.	Year-round
Limits– rivers and streams	● The daily catch and possession limit for fish taken from park waters shall be six pounds and one fish, not to exceed 12 fish. ● There shall be no minimum size limit on fish that may be possessed.	● Catch and release of all native fish species ● Retention of brook trout ● Retention of kokanee caught from the Nisqually River watershed
Limits - lakes	The daily catch and possession limit for fish taken from park waters shall be six pounds and one fish, not to exceed 12 fish.	No limits

Method – river and streams	● Except for artificial fly fishing, the Ohanapecosh River and its tributaries are closed to all fishing. ● Defers to State Regulations: currently selective gear rules.	● Single point barbless hooks in streams and rivers ● No use of lead weights
Method - lakes	Defers to State Regulations: currently multipoint hook with barbs can be used.	● Multipoint hooks with barbs can be used ● May fish for spawning fish ● No use of lead weights
ESA species	● Fishing for bull trout and Dolly Varden is prohibited in all park waters; these species must be safely released if accidentally caught (Superintendent's compendium). ● All wild steelhead fish (unmarked and identified by intact adipose fin) must be released. All other wild (unmarked) salmon species must be released (Superintendent's compendium).	Catch and release of all native fish species