



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Region
501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200
Long Beach, California 90802- 4213

MAR 24 2006

Mr. Ryan Broddrick, Director
California Department of Fish and Game
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Broddrick:

I would like to express my concerns regarding the early season recreational salmon fisheries scheduled to occur from April 1, 2006 to April 30, 2006 in state waters off the California coast. As you know, the projected number of natural spawners expected to return to the Klamath River this fall is low. In fact, even without further fishing from Cape Falcon, Oregon to Point Sur, California through August 31, 2006, the conservation objective established under the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) requiring a minimum escapement of 35,000 naturally spawning Klamath River fall Chinook will unlikely be met. Given the circumstances, for fisheries beginning May 1, the Salmon FMP requires that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) close salmon fisheries within its jurisdiction that impact the stock. As a result, any fishing that would occur during the 2006 season from May 1 to August 31, 2006 would have to be approved by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) by emergency rule.

The Council, in an attempt to preserve flexibility to potentially allow some limited fishing to proceed under an emergency rule later in the season, took the important step of recommending a closure of these early season fisheries when they met in March. NMFS concurred with the Council's recommendation and immediately closed commercial and recreational fisheries in federal waters by inseason action. The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) participated in the Council's decision and did not indicate there would be a problem implementing this closure in state waters in a timely fashion. If, however, the state fisheries are allowed to proceed, we must account for impacts to Klamath River fall Chinook. While the number of Klamath fish harvested will not be great in the early season fisheries, that number will further reduce whatever opportunity there may be for considering limited fishing later in the 2006 salmon fishing season.

The inability of California to take timely action to modify early salmon fisheries will present a problem in future years. Early season fisheries (before May 1) are established during the Council process a year in advance, before information is available on the projected run strength for that year. The Council has recommended (and NMFS approved) these fisheries in the past with the understanding that we could cooperate with the states to modify those fisheries should the updated run size forecasts warrant such an action. If CDFG is not capable of modifying or closing these fisheries in a timely manner upon receiving such information, as appears to be the



case this year, the Council will have to reconsider allowing any such opportunities in the future. I hope that you and I can work together to insure that CDFG has a timely means of modifying pre-May 1 salmon fisheries in response to run size forecasts in 2007 and beyond.

The 2006 salmon fishing season is going to be difficult for everyone involved and I understand your desire to allow the California Fish and Game Commission to address this issue at their upcoming April meeting. However, I think it is crucial that these fisheries be closed as quickly as possible to minimize further impacts to Klamath River fall Chinook. Our agencies have successfully worked in close coordination in the past, and I am confident we can continue to do so in the future.

Thank you for your consideration on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rodney R. McInnis".

Rodney R. McInnis
Regional Administrator

cc: D. Robert Lohn – NMFS Northwest Region
Donald K. Hansen – Pacific Fishery Management Council