



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115

MAY 19 2008

Coalition of Salmon Communities
P.O. Box 56
Astoria, OR 97103-0056

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for your letter of April 21, 2008 regarding the management of Lower Columbia River coho. As indicated in our 2008 Guidance letter to the Pacific Fishery Management Council, I support the use of abundance based harvest strategies such as the one developed by Oregon for Lower Columbia River coho. Oregon's harvest matrix is keyed to the status of the Clackamas and Sandy River populations. However, it is not clear if or how the matrix addresses the needs of other populations in the Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU). We have highlighted similar concerns in earlier guidance letters beginning in 2006 and in earlier correspondence since the ESU was first listed. Because of these and other related uncertainties, we have taken a conservative approach to applying the matrix in recent years. Additional work needs to be done before we can be confident that the matrix is properly calibrated to the needs of the ESU.

The most important next step is development of a recovery scenario that identifies the target status for all populations, including those that need to be managed for high viability. Once this scenario is complete, the harvest matrix should be reviewed, and revised if necessary, to insure that it is responsive to the needs of all the populations in the ESU, particularly those designated for high viability. We support development of these recovery scenarios through the recovery planning process. Recovery planning provides the opportunity for the state agencies and their associated stake holders to take the lead on these important decisions.

As you know, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board developed an Interim Regional Recovery Plan that includes preliminary recommendations on a recovery scenario for Lower Columbia River coho on the Washington side of river. The state of Oregon is now working with their stakeholders on a recovery plan for the Oregon side. NOAA Fisheries is working with Oregon on their recovery plan. We encourage you to work with Oregon and their stakeholders to encourage timely completion of their recovery plan products, and to insure that the plan provides the necessary guidance with respect to Lower Columbia River coho. Ideally, the plan will describe a recovery scenario that identifies the priority populations for the ESU, and specifies how harvest and other key factors should be managed to achieve recovery. Because Oregon and Washington have worked independently on their recovery initiatives, it will also be necessary to integrate the




comprehensive plan that addresses the full Lower Columbia River coho ESU. Your input during the recovery planning process can also help facilitate the necessary timely integration of the joint plans.

I appreciate your concern and interest in clarifying how fisheries will be managed in the future for Lower Columbia River coho. As indicated above, I intend to work through the recovery planning process to resolve the outstanding issues as quickly as possible.

If you have further questions, please contact me or Peter Dygert of my staff (206-526-6734).

Sincerely,



for D. Robert Lohn
Regional Administrator

cc:

Don McIsaac, PFMC
Jeff Koenings, WDFW
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