

GUIDANCE FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT FOR THE SALMON TECHNICAL TEAM COLLATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Puget Sound Tribes request that the Pacific Fishery Management Council instruct its Salmon Technical Team to utilize the final 2014 agreed upon fishery inputs, with adjustments for pink fisheries as the “base model” package for Puget Sound within the Chinook Fishery Regulation Assessment Model (FRAM).

From our perspective, prudent management would dictate that initial assessment of 2015 ocean options should reflect last year’s Chinook conservation actions with the addition of impacts associated with anticipated 2015 pink salmon fisheries. The 2014 suite of Puget Sound Chinook salmon fisheries were by far the most constrained in recent years. This year’s forecasts indicated further conservation actions will be required. The 2015 forecasts for Chinook salmon are down consistently throughout the Puget Sound region for both natural and hatchery stocks as presented in Table I-1 of the STT’s Preseason I Report. Overall, Puget Sound Chinook salmon production (natural and hatchery) is down 28% from last year.

Current environmental conditions present another reason for us to advocate for a realistic starting point for the “base model” package regarding Puget Sound fisheries. Currently, snowpack throughout the Cascade Mountain range in Washington State is at or below recorded lows for this time of the year. Like forecasted Chinook abundance, outlooks for this coming water year within Puget Sound look worse than last year. This last year several of our hatchery facilities struggled to achieve egg take goals. Many stocks came in below forecasted abundance, and it seems ocean survival was lower, perhaps attributed to the warm water conditions observed off the coast. In-river, we experienced pre-spawn mortality seemingly contributed to low flows and elevated water temperature.

It is this combination of factors that compel us to request this “base model” package for assessing alternative fishery options for this coming 2015-16 season. We feel it is essential not to set unrealistic expectations this year regarding Puget Sound Chinook harvest opportunities given lower abundance forecasts and current environmental conditions.