

## SACRAMENTO RIVER WINTER CHINOOK CONTROL RULE UPDATE

The Council is concerned with the current the status of Sacramento River winter Chinook (SRWC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service has identified SRWC as one of eight “[Species in the Spotlight](#)” among the most at risk of extinction in the near future. In 2015, the Council applied considerable fishery restrictions and levels of precaution beyond what is called for in the current SRWC harvest policy due to extended drought conditions and evidence of poor juvenile recruitment. At the November 2015 Council meeting, the Council formed the Ad Hoc Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup (SRWCW) and tasked this new advisory body with exploring an alternative SRWC harvest policy for the future. The Council and NMFS are striving to complete this effort for use in the management of 2017 fisheries and has approved an aggressive tentative schedule to accomplish this goal (Agenda Item E.9, Attachment 1).

SRWC are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and have been harvested incidentally in ocean fisheries, primarily off the central California coast. A two-part consultation standard for endangered SRWC was first implemented in 2012. The first component of the consultation standard is the season and size limit provisions for central California salmon fisheries. The second component of the consultation standard is specified by a control rule that limits the maximum age-3 impact rate for the area south of Point Arena, California based on the geometric mean of the most recent three years of spawner escapement.

The Council has expressed concern that the control rule is unnecessarily restrictive and could allow for *de minimis* levels of fishing rather than complete closures when abundance is low without significantly increasing the risk of extinction. There are also concerns that the control rule’s reliance on spawner escapement to determine allowable impacts is not adequately reactive to environmental and biological stressors such as the ongoing drought, *El Niño* events, and reduced juvenile survival.

The Council and NMFS employed a collaborative process in the review and revision of harvest policies for Lower Columbia River tule fall Chinook and Lower Columbia River natural coho and is proposing to utilize a similar process to develop and analyze alternative harvest policies for SRWC. The SRWCW is scheduled hold their first session at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 8 in conjunction with the March Council meeting in Sacramento, California. The focus of this initial meeting will be to review the status of SRWC, revisit the current harvest control rule, consider potential abundance indicators, discuss potential alternative harvest control rules, review the proposed process and schedule, and outline objectives and analyses for future work. The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) will be working closely with the SRWCW and both groups are anticipated to provide reports to the Council under this agenda item.

### **Council Task:**

- 1. Consider the reports of the SRWCW and other advisory bodies.**
- 2. Provide direction on the development and analysis of control rule alternatives.**
- 3. Approve a process and schedule for future work and review.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.9, Attachment 1: Draft Sacramento River Winter Chinook Harvest Policy Review schedule.

Agenda Order:

- E.9 Sacramento River Winter Chinook Control Rule Update Mike Burner
- a. Report of the Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup Mike O'Farrell
  - b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
  - c. Public Comment
  - d. **Council Action:** Direction to the Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup on Development and Analysis of Control Rule Options

PFMC  
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