

SALMON TECHNICAL TEAM REPORT ON ANNUAL MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE CHANGES AMENDMENT SCOPING

The Salmon Technical Team (STT) considered the implications of a proposed amendment to the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan to change the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council's) salmon management calendar, including potential delays in future April Council meetings and the start of the regulatory year. The current proposal lacks sufficient detail for a complete consideration, but the STT offers the following list of potential benefits and substantial drawbacks that might arise from such a change.

Benefits:

- A delay would allow more time for the Pacific Salmon Commission's Chinook Technical Committee (PSC-CTC) to complete and fully vet the PSC Chinook Model calibration that sets abundance indices and total allowable catches in aggregate abundance-based management fisheries.
- A longer period between the end of the April Council meeting and the deadline for finalizing the federal salmon regulations could provide more time to correct errors.
- There would be more time for the STT to finish Preseason Report II prior to the April Council meeting.
- There could be more flexibility in the scheduling of public hearings, thereby providing more time for public review of the alternatives developed at the March Council meeting.

Drawbacks:

- A delay in the regulatory year would create serious difficulties in planning May quota fisheries north of Cape Falcon. Typically, fishing seasons prior to the current May 1 start of the regulatory year are set in the previous year and adjusted inseason as necessary. However, these fisheries are not quota-managed. There would be no rational basis for the development, allocation, and implementation of quotas a year prior to the adoption of final regulations. For example, preliminary quotas set in the previous year would not have the benefit of abundance forecasts for stocks in the fishery.
- While a delay would allow more time for the PSC-CTC to complete and fully vet the PSC Chinook Model calibration, the STT has some doubt that the increased time would necessarily result in CTC agreement on a model calibration in time for Council fishery planning.
- A delay would put recreational salmon and halibut regulations out of sync and create additional problems for publication of regulations by the states.

The benefits and drawbacks listed here all depend on the length of the delay in the April meeting and the start of the regulatory year. The STT believes that a delay of less than a week may be pointless, whereas a delay of more than two weeks would seem unnecessary and stretch the process out for too long. The STT is not in favor of initiating an amendment process at this time, but would participate in additional scoping.