



Pacific Fishery Management Council *NEWS RELEASE*

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PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL CHOOSES POTENTIAL OPTIONS FOR 2006 SALMON MANAGEMENT

At its meeting in Seattle last week, the Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted a set of options for 2006 ocean salmon fisheries affecting commercial, recreational and tribal fisheries off Washington, Oregon and California. The Council will make final season recommendations on April 7, and forward the decision to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for approval.

For the immediate seasons during the next two months, the Council recommended, and NMFS approved, a closure of ocean commercial fisheries scheduled to be open between March 15-April 30 in the Fort Bragg area and off the Oregon coast from Cape Falcon to the Oregon/California border. Ocean recreational fisheries scheduled to be open between April 1-30 between Point Arena and Point Sur, California were also closed.

For fisheries scheduled to be open between May 1, 2006 and October 31, 2006, the Council adopted three options for public review, and will make a final decision during the April Council meeting in Sacramento. Options from Cape Falcon (near the town of Manzanita, Oregon) to Point Sur (just south of Monterey, California) range from a season similar to or slightly more conservative than last year, to a complete closure for both recreational and commercial fisheries. All of the options allow a range of spawning escapement for Klamath fall chinook between 13,800 and 25,400. ("Escapement" is the number of fish reaching the spawning grounds after the fishing season.) For fisheries between Cape Falcon and the U.S./Canada border, the three options allow from about two-thirds to one-third of last year's quotas.

More details on these options will be posted on the Council's website this afternoon (www.pcouncil.org).

In addition, public hearings on the salmon options will be held on Monday, March 27 at the Chateau Westport hotel in Westport, Washington and the Red Lion Hotel in Coos Bay, Oregon; and on Tuesday, March 28 at the Flamingo Hotel in Santa Rosa, California. All hearings begin at 7:00 p.m. For location details, please see the Council website (<http://www.pcouncil.org/events/2006/salproc06.html#hearings>).

For the area south of Cape Falcon, Oregon, the actions taken by the Council and NMFS are in response to diminishing numbers of naturally spawning Klamath River Chinook salmon. For the third year in a row, the number of mature Chinook spawning naturally in the Klamath River is expected to fall below 35,000, the conservation objective listed in the Council's fishery management plan for salmon. Even without additional ocean fishing, only 29,000 Chinook would be expected to return to natural spawning grounds in 2006.

Biologists estimate that there are now 110,000 adult Klamath River fall Chinook in the ocean. Prior to last year's season, the estimate was 185,700. The lowest forecast on record was 96,000 fish in 1992.

A complete closure could mean millions in lost revenues for commercial salmon fisheries, as well as a lack of local wild salmon in stores and restaurants. This comes after a difficult year in which commercial salmon fisheries along the coast were reduced by about half, resulting in significant losses to fisheries and supporting businesses. In response, National Marine Fisheries Service may work to bring federal disaster relief to salmon fishing businesses.

For the area south of Cape Falcon, the average state-level income impacts for 2001-2005 were \$64 million (inflation adjusted) and income impacts associated with the 2005 fishery were \$57 million. Almost all of this income may be affected by the need to protect Klamath River fall Chinook.

For the area north of Cape Falcon, the average state-level income impacts for 2001-2005 were \$13 million (inflation adjusted) and income impacts associated with the 2005 fishery were \$12 million. Some portion of this income is likely to be affected by the need to conserve northern (Columbia River and Fraser River) salmon stocks.

Although the three years of diminishing Klamath returns could result in NMFS designating the Klamath fall Chinook stock as "overfished," other factors are thought to be primarily responsible for the depressed condition of the stock. The Council has written several letters to federal agencies including the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation pointing out the negative effects to salmon populations below Iron Gate Dam from upstream agricultural water withdrawals and hydroelectric projects. Among other things, the dams are blamed for raising water temperatures, reducing or eliminating spring floods that rush fish to the sea, and allowing the river to become infested with parasites. In 2002, 70,000 adult Chinook salmon in the lower Klamath River were killed by a combination of environmental factors including low river flows.

The Council is scheduled to choose a final option on 2006 salmon fisheries at its next meeting at the Doubletree Hotel Sacramento, Sacramento, California, on April 7.

For more information, please see:

- Salmon management agenda items in the Council's March 2006 Briefing Book:

<http://www.pcouncil.org/bb/2006/bb0306.html#salmon>

- Council/Habitat Committee correspondence on Klamath flows:
<http://www.pcouncil.org/habitat/habdocs.html>
- Guide to the Pacific Fishery Management Council process:
<http://www.pcouncil.org/guide/Guide-intropage.html>