



## Pacific Fishery Management Council *NEWS RELEASE*

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### PLENTIFUL SALMON DRIVE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL OPTIONS FOR 2012 SEASON

Sacramento, CA. – Encouraged by predictions of plentiful salmon returns along the West Coast, the Pacific Fishery Management Council released three alternatives for managing salmon fisheries today. After hearing public comment on the alternatives, the Council will make a final recommendation at their next meeting in Seattle on April 1-6.

“It is great to see such a nice rebound for California salmon populations and the prospect of good fishing in 2012,” said Council chairman Dan Wolford.

Salmon fisheries in California and Oregon look particularly promising, due primarily to good river conditions, and excellent ocean conditions, for salmon. Sacramento, Klamath, and Rogue River Chinook returns are expected to be significantly higher than during the past several years, and Oregon Coast coho also have a strong forecast; however, fishery alternatives are necessarily constrained to protect Endangered Species Act-listed Sacramento River winter Chinook and Columbia River coho stocks. North of Cape Falcon, returns look similar to last year.

#### **NORTHERN OREGON AND WASHINGTON (NORTH OF CAPE FALCON)**

North of Cape Falcon, fisheries are expected to be similar to last year. The Oregon Production Index coho forecast is 632,700 fish, about the same as last year. Columbia River hatchery coho returns in 2011 were larger than forecast, but still below average. Columbia River Chinook returns were generally lower than forecast, but above historical averages.

About 742,500 summer and fall Chinook are expected to return to the Columbia River compared to an actual return in 2011 of 684,400. The 2012 Columbia River tule Chinook forecasts are mixed, but overall above average. The hatchery coho forecasts for the Columbia River are slightly lower than last year while the forecast for Oregon coastal natural coho is similar to last year's actual return and the highest forecast since 1996.

Washington coast coho stock forecasts are generally higher than last year, although Puget Sound coho forecasts are generally lower.

### *Sport Season Alternatives*

Ocean sport fishery alternatives north of Cape Falcon in Oregon and off the Washington coast have seasons similar to 2011, with mark-selective coho quotas ranging from 54,600 to 71,400 that start in late June and run into September (last year, the quota was 67,200 marked coho). For Chinook salmon, quotas range from 35,500 Chinook to 51,500 Chinook (last year, the quota was 64,600 Chinook). Two alternatives include a mark-selective Chinook fishery in June.

### *Commercial and Tribal Season Alternatives*

Non-Indian ocean commercial fishery alternatives north of Cape Falcon include traditional Chinook seasons between May and September. Chinook quotas for all areas and times range from 32,500-47,500, greater than the 2011 quota of 30,900. The marked coho quotas range from 10,400 to 13,600 (compared to last year's quota of 12,800).

Tribal ocean fishery alternatives north of Cape Falcon have Chinook quotas ranging from 40,000 to 55,000 and coho quotas ranging from 40,000 to 55,000, similar to last year's quotas of 41,000 Chinook and 42,000 coho.

## **CALIFORNIA AND SOUTHERN OREGON (SOUTH OF CAPE FALCON)**

In the Klamath River, biologists are forecasting four times more salmon than last year – and an astounding 15 times more than in 2006. The ocean salmon population is estimated to be 1.6 million adult Klamath River fall Chinook, compared to last year's forecast of 371,100. This estimate is based largely on the 85,840 two-year-old salmon (jacks) that returned to the Klamath in 2011. This is the highest number of jacks to return since at least 1978, when recordkeeping began.

Sacramento stocks are also looking better, with a conservative forecast of ocean abundance of 819,400 Sacramento River fall Chinook, up from 729,000 last year. Adult spawners in the Sacramento system are expected to be at least 436,000. The spawning escapement objective is 122,000 – 180,000 adult spawners, and the 2012 annual catch limit is at least 245,820 spawners<sup>1</sup>.

These returns are particularly important when seen in the context of the last several years. Klamath and Sacramento stocks drive ocean fishing seasons off California and Oregon. In 2008 and 2009, poor Sacramento returns led to the largest fishery closures on record. In 2010, returns improved, allowing limited commercial fishing season off California. In 2011, there were commercial fishing seasons in Oregon and California areas at various times between May 1 and September 30. Commercial fishermen have noted that because of the series of poor years, much of the capacity to fish commercially – especially in California – has been lost.

#### *Sport Season Alternatives*

Oregon ocean recreational alternatives south of Cape Falcon open for Chinook March 15 and run through September or October. **Coho** fishery alternatives include mark-selective fisheries in July as far south as the Oregon/California border and non-mark-selective coho fisheries in September down to Humbug Mountain.

Ocean **Chinook** fishing alternatives in the Brookings/Crescent City/Eureka area open in May and continue into September.

California ocean sport fishing alternatives generally start April 7 and run through October or November from Fort Bragg south, but size limits vary in the San Francisco and Monterey areas to protect ESA-listed Sacramento winter-run Chinook.

#### *Commercial Season Options*

Commercial Chinook salmon season alternatives in the Tillamook, Newport, and Coos Bay area open April 1 and run through October. Oregon season options in the Brookings area open April 1 and run through August or September, with monthly quota fisheries starting in June.

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<sup>1</sup> The conservation goal, or escapement goal, is the optimal number of adult fish returning to spawn in order to maximize the production of the stock. The annual catch limit is the number of spawners associated with preventing overfishing on an annual basis.

California alternatives in Crescent City/Eureka have quota fisheries in late September or are closed. In Fort Bragg, commercial alternatives open in July or August and run through September. In the San Francisco and Monterey areas, alternatives open May 1 and run through September with some closures in June. Along the south-central coast, season alternatives are open from May 1 through September 30.

The Council also included alternatives for to collect genetic stock identification samples from research fisheries in closed times and areas. All fish caught in research fisheries would have to be released unharmed after collection of biological samples.

### **Management Process**

Public hearings to receive input on the alternatives are scheduled for March 26 in Westport, Washington and Coos Bay, Oregon; and for March 27 in Eureka, California. The Council will consult with scientists, hear public comment, and revise preliminary decisions until it chooses a final alternative at its meeting during the week of April 1 in Seattle, Washington.

At its April 1-6 meeting in Seattle, the Council will narrow these options to a single season recommendation to be forwarded to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for their final approval before May 1.

All Council meetings are open to the public, and audio is streamed online (for information on how to hear the online audio, go to <http://tinyurl.com/7vvxuvg>).

### **Council Role**

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 for the purpose of managing fisheries 3-200 miles offshore of the United States of America coastline. The Pacific Council recommends management measures for fisheries off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington.

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### **On the Web**

- Pacific Fishery Management Council: <http://www.pcouncil.org>
- Options for 2012 salmon management will be posted on the Council website (link above) this evening.
- Geographical points used in salmon management: <http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/geosalmon1.pdf>
- Explanation of common terms used in salmon management: [http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/com\\_terms\\_salmon.pdf](http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/com_terms_salmon.pdf)