



Pacific Fishery Management Council *NEWS RELEASE*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, March 17, 2008

Contact: Ms. Jennifer Gilden, Communications Officer, 503-820-2280
Dr. Donald McIsaac, Executive Director, 503-820-2280
Mr. Jim Milbury, National Marine Fisheries Service, 310-245-7114

Note: This release was initially sent out on Friday, March 14; minor editorial changes have been made.

FISHING OPTIONS DIRE FOR 2008 SALMON SEASON: COUNCIL RESPONDS TO COLLAPSE OF SACRAMENTO FALL RUN CHINOOK SALMON STOCK

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The Pacific Fishery Management Council today adopted three public review options for the 2008 salmon season off the West Coast of the United States, two of which will leave California and most of Oregon without a fishing season. Seasons for northern Oregon and Washington options are drastically more limited than usual. The Council will select a final option at their next meeting in Seattle, Washington on April 6 – 12.

“The status of Sacramento fall Chinook has suddenly collapsed to an unprecedented low level,” said Donald Hansen, Chairman of the Pacific Fishery Management Council. “The effect on California and Oregon salmon fisheries is a disaster by any definition.”

The return of fall run Chinook to the Sacramento River, which affects the fishery primarily in California and Southern Oregon, is projected to be 58,200 under one option that closes all salmon fishing, and 52,400 under an option that allows small fisheries in specific areas. The minimum conservation goal is 122,000 – 180,000 spawning adult salmon. As recently as 2002, 775,000 adults returned to spawn.

The reason for the sudden collapse of the Sacramento fall Chinook stock is not readily apparent. “Ocean conditions have been poor, and there are a lot of things that can go wrong for salmon in freshwater,” said David Ortmann, Vice-Chairman of the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The Council has requested a multi-agency task force led by the National Marine Fisheries Service’s West-Coast Science Centers to research about 50 potential causes of the decline and report back to the Council at its September meeting in Boise, Idaho.

The forecast for returns of coho stocks that fuel fisheries off Washington and northern Oregon is also weak, and fishing options in those areas range from 10 to 20 percent of last year's catch. Projected Chinook returns in this area, however, are forecast to be about the same as last year.

In general, the three options accepted for waters north of Cape Falcon to the U.S./Canadian border range from a quota of 15,000 to 25,000 coho (last year's limit was 140,000), and 45,000 to 25,000 Chinook (last year's limit was 32,500), split between commercial and recreational fishermen.

For coastal waters off Oregon and California (South of Cape Falcon to the U.S./Mexico border), the options for commercial and recreational fishing range from no salmon fishing for Chinook or coho, to allowing a small fishery of coho off central Oregon and short seasons in selected areas for Chinook. As recently as 2003, fishermen caught as many as 944,000 Chinook and 84,000 coho.

The three detailed options adopted by the Council for the 2008 salmon season, and a schedule of public hearings, have been posted on the Council website at the links below.

###

On the Web

Pacific Fishery Management Council: <http://www.pcouncil.org>

Options for 2008 salmon management:
<http://www.pcouncil.org/salmon/salcurr.html#saloptions08>

Schedule of hearings: <http://www.pcouncil.org/events/2008/salproc08.html#hearings>

Geographical points used in salmon management:
<http://www.pcouncil.org/facts/geosalmon.pdf>

Online press packet: http://www.pcouncil.org/newsreleases/sal_presspacket.html