

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT
ON THE NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES REPORT

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) received a briefing from Mr. Rob Jones and Mr. Jeromy Jording of the National Marine Fisheries Service on proposed changes to Mitchell Act hatchery practices in the Columbia River basin. The SAS was appreciative of the opportunity to discuss the issues, but is very concerned about the proposed changes and the strong potential for adverse impacts to West Coast fisheries and communities.

The SAS feels there has been inadequate opportunity for stakeholder input on the proposed action and the final decisions. Mitchell Act hatchery production has been critical as a means of mitigating the adverse effects of habitat degradation and hydropower development in the basin. The potential reductions in hatchery production from Columbia River hatcheries under the Mitchell Act could cause substantial reductions in fishing opportunity on the West Coast and in the Columbia River, particularly reductions in coho and tule fall Chinook production. The SAS does not feel like it has been clearly demonstrated that the benefits to naturally produced salmon outweigh the economic hardships that coastal and river communities will suffer.

The SAS recommends that the Council send a letter to the National Marine Fisheries Service requesting an extension so that stakeholders can be involved before a final decision is made on the proposed action. SAS members are available to assist with the organization of public hearings. SAS is very concerned that the extensive public process that developed the comprehensive long-term recovery plans is being circumvented before their effectiveness can be evaluated. These recovery plans have initiated a series of management actions intended to address the issues identified by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The SAS urges the council to request an extension of the final decision in order to allow sufficient time for stakeholder involvement.

There is a large number of problems that could arise if the National Marine Fisheries rushes judgement with significant hatchery cuts on January 15 as proposed:

- It does not appear that the effectiveness of weirs have been properly analyzed.
- The current PSC negotiations will be compromised if additional fishing pressure is put on other wild stocks.
- It is unclear if NMFS has modeled ocean fisheries appropriately
- The effects of re-programming fish above Bonneville Dam needs input from the ocean and the in-river tribal co-managers.