



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Herbert A. Pollard, Chair | Charles A. Tracy, Executive Director

April 20, 2017

Mr. Barry Thom, Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region
1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97232-1274

Re: Transmittal of 2017 Salmon Season Recommendations


Dear ~~Mr. Thom~~:

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) concluded its preseason ocean salmon fishery management process by adopting final annual regulation recommendations for submission to the Secretary of Commerce at its April 2017 meeting in Sacramento, California. The regulations are necessary for implementing 2017 ocean salmon fisheries off the coast of Washington, Oregon, and California, as prescribed in the Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Council's recommended regulations comport with terms and agreements of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) and the requirements for stocks listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as outlined in your letter from March 3, 2017, and in the applicable Biological Opinions and Section 4(d) Determinations. The regulations are also designed to ensure consistency with the escapement-based annual catch limits (ACLs) or minimum escapement goals for Sacramento River fall Chinook, Klamath River fall Chinook, and Willapa Bay coho.

Under the Council's recommended salmon fisheries, salmon stocks originating from the Columbia River, Oregon, and California meet all of the applicable conservation objectives in the FMP. North of these areas, the conservation objective in the FMP for Queets River wild coho could not be met with 2017 ocean fishery alternatives when combined with in-river Treaty fisheries, although relatively healthy harvestable Columbia River and coastal coho stocks are available. To address this situation, the Council's recommendations depart from the letter of the FMP and thus require adoption by emergency rule. The Council recommends deviating from the coho allocation schedule between recreational and commercial fisheries north of Cape Falcon to allow a greater portion of the very limited coho harvest to be taken by the recreational fishery which is highly dependent on coho.

The projected spawning escapement for Queets River coho is below the FMP objective of 5,800 natural spawners. Under court orders for Washington coastal and Puget Sound stocks, the treaty tribes and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) may agree to annual spawner targets that differ from the FMP objective. In 2017, the tribal and WDFW co-managers agreed to an escapement objective of 5,130. This reduced escapement results in an expected exploitation rate of 22 percent.

The forecast abundance for Queets River wild coho places this stock in the 'low' category under the PST, which limits the exploitation rate to 20 percent. The Pacific Salmon Commission's Southern Panel concurred with an exception to this limit under Chapter 5, Paragraph 11(c) of the PST. The result is that the proposed action is in compliance with provisions of both the FMP and the PST.

Due to the reduced forecast of Klamath River fall Chinook, 2017 ocean salmon fisheries have been shaped to limit impacts on this stock to 8.1 percent as required under the *de minimis* standard outlined in the current FMP. Section 6.2.1 of Preseason Report III outlines the FMP guidance and the Council's review and considerations in recommending a *de minimis* exploitation rate in 2017.

The Council's specific regulation recommendations are contained in Preseason Report III (enclosed). Within Preseason Report III, Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 and 2 provide a complete description of the recommended non-Indian commercial and recreational ocean salmon fishery regulations. Table 3 provides the recommended regulations for the treaty-Indian commercial ocean fishery, and Table 4 displays the quota levels for individual fisheries managed under quotas. Details of the harvest impacts are provided in Tables 5 and 6 for Chinook and coho salmon. The impacts are provided in terms of landings and/or nonretention mortality, harvest indexes or rates for species considered under the ESA, and ocean or spawner escapements for stocks with Council management goals or ACLs, or other criteria as appropriate for compliance with terms under the PST and agreements reached with northwest Indian tribes. Table 7 provides a breakdown of the fishery impacts on indicator stocks for lower Columbia natural, Oregon Coastal natural, Rogue-Klamath coho, and lower Columbia River natural tule Chinook. Table 8 summarizes the expected mark rates in the mark-selective coho fisheries. Tables 9 and 10 and Figures 3 and 4 provide estimates of economic impacts expected from the recommended fisheries.

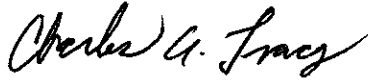
The Council's commercial regulation recommendations include restrictions for incidental halibut harvest in the commercial salmon troll fishery. The recommended salmon troll halibut regulations are being transmitted under a separate letter; however, Item C.7 in Table 1 also includes the detailed halibut regulations.

Preseason Report III also constitutes the third and final part of an Environmental Assessment (EA) necessary to comply with National Environmental Policy Act requirements for the 2017 ocean salmon regulations. The first part of the EA (Preseason Report I) included a description of the No-action Alternative and an analysis of the effects of the No-action Alternative on salmon stocks managed under the Salmon FMP. The second part of the EA (Preseason Report II) included the statement of the purpose and need, a description of the affected environment, a description of 2017 ocean salmon regulation Alternatives under consideration, and an analysis of the effects of those Alternatives on the affected environment. Preseason Report III includes the description and analysis of the Proposed Action. Table 11 in Preseason Report III summarizes environmental effects of the Alternatives considered during the preseason planning process, including the Proposed Action.

This letter and Preseason Report III contain the recommended 2017 ocean salmon regulations which the Council deems necessary and appropriate to implement the terms and conditions of the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan in a manner consistent with final action taken by

the Council. The Council requests your review, approval, and implementation, on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, of these proposed regulations for the 2017 west coast ocean salmon fishing season beginning May 1. Please have your staff call upon Council Staff Officer Ms. Robin Ehlke for any additional assistance needed to complete the implementation process.

Sincerely,



Mr. Charles A. Tracy
Executive Director

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Enclosures: Preseason Report I
Preseason Report II
Preseason Report III

c: Council Members
Mr. Ryan Wulff
Ms. Sheila Lynch
Ms. Peggy Mundy
Mr. Mike Burner
Dr. Ed Waters

