

## LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER NATURAL COHO HARVEST MATRIX UPDATE

Lower Columbia natural (LCN) coho stocks in the Lower Columbia River evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2005 and efforts to recover these populations often have a constraining effect on ocean and inriver salmon fisheries. Additionally, stocks on the Oregon side of the river have been listed under the Oregon ESA since 1999. Current and Federal ESA implementation has relied on a matrix approach that considers parental spawner escapement and marine survival as a harvest control rule to determine allowable fishery impacts. However, the states of Oregon and Washington have questioned the original scientific and policy basis of the current matrix, and new information is available regarding the status of the populations since development of the current matrix control rule; thus, the Council has scheduled a review and possible revision of the matrix in current use.

At its April 2014 meeting, the Council heard a report from the newly-formed *ad hoc* Lower Columbia Natural Coho Workgroup (LRC Workgroup) and provided guidance on the process and schedule for the development of alternative control rules. The Council directed the LRC Workgroup to develop recommendations on the status of Lower Columbia River coho populations, alternative harvest policies, risk assessment methods and criteria, and to draft a report on coho populations in the Willamette River above Willamette Falls. Since releases of hatchery fish from the LCN ESU ended just above Willamette Falls in 1996, a significant population of natural spawning fish has blossomed on the edge of this ESU. The LRC Workgroup was asked to investigate genetic and population strength information on this group of fish for possible inclusion in a separate matrix from the one that just includes populations within the currently designated ESU.

The LRC Workgroup met at the Council office in Portland, Oregon on May 15 to discuss recommendations and complete two reports to the Council, an overall progress report (Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 1) and a report on Willamette River coho (Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 2). A webinar meeting of the Salmon Technical Team and Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) will occur on June 12 to consider preparing a statement for the agenda item at the June Council meeting.

LRC Workgroup Vice-Chair, Mr. Jeromy Jording, will present the reports to the Council at the June meeting. The Council is tasked with considering the recommendations of the LRC Workgroup and providing guidance on further development of alternative harvest matrices and the associated risk analysis. The LRC Workgroup is planning to convene two meetings between the June and September Council meetings to finalize a range of alternatives. The LRC Workgroup is also interested in convening a joint meeting with the Salmon Advisory Subpanel in advance of the September Council meeting. At the September Council meeting in Spokane, Washington, the Council is scheduled to adopt a range of alternatives for public review before identifying a preferred alternative at the November Council meeting in Costa Mesa, California.

### **Council Task:**

**Provide guidance on the next steps in the development of alternative harvest control rules.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 1: LRC Workgroup Progress Report.
2. Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 2: Willamette River Coho and the Lower Columbia River Coho ESU Boundary Report.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Mike Burner
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. Council Discussion and Guidance as Appropriate

PFMC  
05/30/14