

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER NATURAL COHO HARVEST MATRIX UPDATE

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) met via webinar with the Salmon Technical Team (STT) and members of the Lower Columbia River Natural Coho Workgroup (LRC Workgroup) on Thursday, June 12, 2014. The SAS reviewed the reports of the LRC Workgroup and received an overview presentation by Mr. Ray Beamesderfer. The SAS appreciates the work that has been done thus far and offers the following comments.

The SAS is supportive of efforts to simplify the management of these stocks including the matrix used to determine appropriate harvest levels. The SAS agrees that the current matrix is overly complex with categories that are seldom or never realized. The SAS intends to work with the LRC Workgroup over the summer in the review and analysis of alternative harvest matrices. The SAS recommends considering matrix alternatives with reduced maximum exploitation rates and slightly less restrictive minimum exploitation rates, but with small increased risk to the stocks.

The SAS is encouraged by recent work by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to improve our understanding of populations within the current Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU). The SAS recommends that new information on existing populations be incorporated into the analysis of risk associated with alternative harvest policies. The SAS also believes that these increased monitoring efforts and subsequent improved understanding of the status of Lower Columbia River coho stocks should be a factor in the review of harvest policy.

The SAS reviewed the LRC Workgroup report on coho populations above Willamette Falls (Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 2). The SAS is interested in the recent success of these populations and feels they could be informative to our understanding of Lower Columbia River natural (LCN) coho. The SAS recognizes that coho populations above Willamette Falls are not included in the existing ESU and recommends that these populations be considered in the proposed ESU status review by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in 2015. However, the SAS is not interested in any delay in the development of new harvest policies for this ESU because of future status reviews. The SAS would support the evaluation of a new harvest matrix after three years of implementation. Any revisions to the ESU that may result from the NMFS status review could also be considered at this time.

The SAS appreciates efforts by the LRC Workgroup to work together on the review of the LCN coho harvest matrix. SAS members will attend LRC Workgroup meetings when feasible and requests that LRC Workgroup meetings be streamed online to maximize the potential audience. The SAS supports a joint meeting with the LRC Workgroup in the vicinity of Portland, Oregon in advance of the September 2014 Council meeting and in-lieu of traveling to Spokane. The LRC also recommends a joint meeting with the LRC Workgroup in October to prepare for final Council action on this matter scheduled for the November. Towards that end, the SAS would prefer to be in attendance at the November Council meeting.