SALMON TECHNICAL TEAM REPORT ON IDENTIFICATION OF STOCKS NOT MEETING CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Because the Salmon Technical Team (STT) concluded that the Western Strait of Juan de Fuca (SJF) was not overfished, we did not recommend criteria for determining when the stock is rebuilt. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has adopted status determination criteria defining any stock triggering an overfishing concern as overfished. Under NMFS definition, the Western SJF has been determined to be overfished and therefore criteria for determining when the stock is rebuilt are required. The STT recommends that the Council adopt the same criteria for the Western SJF as recommended for Queets coho: attainment of the conservation objective in one year.

However, the conservation objective for Western SJF is not entirely clear at this point. The Council has adopted the new fishery management plan (FMP) conservation objectives based on the co-manager’s Comprehensive Coho Plan for Puget Sound Management Units. The same plan has been adopted by the Pacific Salmon Commission for Puget Sound coho management units and has been the basis for actual management for the past decade. Under this plan, and the new FMP conservation objectives, the Western SJF and Eastern SFJ are not separate management units, but are combined into a single SJF management unit. The Comprehensive Coho Plan does not define thresholds for status determination, but prescribes allowable exploitation rates on the basis of ocean abundance breakpoints. Under these management objectives, the combination of Low/Normal breakpoint and Normal exploitation rate is associated with the spawning escapement expected to produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY), and the combination of Critical/Low breakpoint and Low exploitation rate produces a lower threshold for spawning escapement. The FMP language specifying thresholds Puget Sound coho status determination criteria based on the new FMP conservation objectives has not yet been finalized; however, the STT believes the lower threshold is consistent with criteria for triggering an overfishing concern. The STT recommends that for Puget Sound coho stocks the escapement levels associated with the Critical/Low breakpoints and the Low exploitation rates be adopted as thresholds for triggering an overfishing concern, and the spawning escapements associated with MSY be adopted as a default criterion for determining when a stock is rebuilt.

For the Strait of Juan de Fuca coho, the lower threshold is 7,007, and the MSY estimate is 10,978. The spawning escapement for the combined Strait of Juan de Fuca coho management unit was 10,200 in 2005, and 7,500 in 2007. Both of these years were above the threshold for triggering an overfishing concern. Escapement for the SJF coho management unit was below the threshold in 2006, and 2008, but has not been below the goal for three consecutive years. Thus, the management unit has not triggered an overfishing concern based on these thresholds and should not be classified as overfished by NMFS.

PFMC
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