

## **KFMC RECOMMENDATIONS TO PFMC<sup>1</sup>**

The KFMC met February 23-25 and March 5-6, 2000 to discuss management of Klamath River fall chinook for 2000. A summary of our discussions and recommendations follow.

### **Issue: Failure to achieve the Klamath River spawner escapement floor in 1999.**

The KFMC discussed the cause of the failure to achieve the Klamath River natural spawner escapement floor in 1999 with the Klamath River Technical Advisory Team (KRTAT). They report that the abundance of age 4 fish was only about 1/3 of the pre-season prediction, and the age 3 abundance was about double the pre-season prediction. The river escapement of age 3 fish was not sufficient to offset the shortfall of age 4 fish. Also, the natural component of the escapement was only 56% compared to a pre-season prediction of 73% natural spawners.

Our stock projection models were updated to include these new data points.

The stock has been managed to meet the escapement floor for natural spawners of 35,000 adult fish in 9 out of the past 10 years. The floor was not achieved in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1999. This past year represented the third consecutive year that the fisheries have been managed to meet the floor.

Adjustments were made in the prediction methods beginning in 1994 to remove bias at low stock sizes. These adjustments included forcing the ages 3 and 4 regression lines through zero and using the recent 5-year average natural escapement percentage for projecting the proportion of spawners that use natural areas. The KRTAT has reviewed alternatives for predicting the proportion of natural fish in the run and has concluded that the five year average is still the best method currently available.

### **Issue: Discussion of 35,000 escapement floor.**

The KFMC discussed the 35,000-fish escapement "floor." Past practice has been to use the floor as a target, rather than an actual floor. No fishing would have been allowed in most recent years if the objective were to achieve a high probability that the 35,000 escapement floor would have been met in those years.

Assuming the current prediction methods are unbiased, there is presently a 50% chance of failing to achieve the natural spawner floor in a floor-managed year. The KRTAT analysis indicates that, given this year's predicted stock abundance, achieving a 70% probability of meeting or exceeding the 35,000 natural spawner floor would require raising the natural escapement target to 50,000 adults (71,400, including hatchery fish). The low precision in the stock abundance predictors and the estimated proportion of natural spawners increases the magnitude of errors in these predictions.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by KFMC March 6, 2000.

The KFMC recommends that the escapement floor be used as a minimum escapement target for the basin for the year 2000 management season.

**Issue: Threat of overfishing the stock**

Three consecutive years of failing to achieve the escapement floor for Klamath fall chinook would meet the FMP definition of an overfished stock. This would require agency consultation and a technical analysis aimed at correcting the situation.

It is apparent that the Klamath Basin fall chinook runs continue to be severely depressed. The available data indicate very low survival of naturally produced fish, evidenced by low recruitment following large adult escapements. Immediate attention needs to be paid to habitat conditions in the main stems of the Klamath and Trinity rivers, as well as in the major tributaries. Flows in these areas need to be increased and timed to restore production of native salmonids within the basin. Further reductions in ocean and river fisheries will, in our opinion, serve no purpose but to further penalize the fishermen and local communities that depend on Klamath River fishery resources.

The KFMC has considered the threat of not meeting the escapement floor in 2000, and has decided to stay with the projection models used in 1999, adjusted to include the new data points. Thus, the KFMC endorses the stock abundance projection report of the KRTAT dated 9 February 2000.

The KFMC recognizes that failure to meet the floor in 2000 may require the KFMC to consider raising the escapement target in 2001. This would be done to better assure that this stock does not meet the FMP definition of an overfished stock.

**Issue: Allocation of fish to the river sport fishery**

The KFMC discussed the allocation of fall chinook to the river sport fishery and received a report that the California Fish and Game Commission is considering allocating 15-20 % of the non-tribal share of Klamath fall chinook to the river sport fishery. A motion by the KFMC to allocate 15% of the non-tribal share to the river sport fishery failed to achieve a consensus vote. A subsequent motion passed that any maturing adult fall chinook that are not utilized in ocean fisheries, and that are available for harvest in 2000, should be made available by the Commission to the river sport fishery (see attached letter to the California Fish and Game Commission).

A Commission subcommittee met March 3 and is recommending that the Commission adopt the 15 % allocation to the river sport fishery. Thus, the KFMC and PFMC should use the 15 % figure for developing 2000 ocean fishing regulation options.

**Issue: Allocation of fish to the KMZ sport fishery**

The KFMC again agrees that 17 % of the ocean share of Klamath River fall chinook should be allocated to the KMZ sport fishery. To achieve its allocation, the fishery should be managed

based on time and area closures, minimum size limits, and bag and possession limits.

**Issue: Allocation of fish to the CA and OR troll fisheries**

The KFMC recognizes that ESA constraints may have a greater influence on ocean fishing regulations than the allowable harvest of Klamath fall chinook. The KFMC recommends that 1999 commercial regulations be used as the base for developing 2000 regulations. In 1999, the allowable harvest rate for age 4 fish was 12.3%. In 2000, the rate may increase to as high as 15%. The SAS representatives from the two states should negotiate, in consultation with KFMC representatives, how these fish can be utilized in 2000.

