

STATUS OF QUEETS COHO AND OVERFISHING CRITERIA OF AMENDMENT 14

The table below displays the recent spawner escapements of Queets coho. The stock has achieved the annual target agreed to by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDF) and the Quinault Indian Nation under U.S. District Court orders in at least one of the past three years. The spawner escapement exceeded the lower end of the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) conservation objective (5,800 spawners) in both 1995 and 1996; 6,200 and 9,000 spawners, respectively.

Queets Coho Spawners (in 1,000s)		1997	1998	1999
Wild:	Expected	2.1	3.5	3.4
	Actual Escapement	1.9	4.1	4.8
Supplemental:	Expected	-	0.6	2.4
	Actual	-	1.4	0.5
Total:	Expected (Annual Target)	2.1	4.0	5.7
	Actual	1.9	5.5	5.3
	MSY Range = 5.8 to 14.5			

The Council's salmon fishery management plan (FMP) as modified by Amendment 14 (Section 3.2.3) states:

The Council's criteria for an overfishing concern are met if, in three consecutive years, the postseason estimates indicate a natural stock has fallen short of its conservation objective (MSY, MSP, or spawner floor as noted for some harvest rate objectives) in Table 3-1.

The portion of Table 3-1 which contains conservation objectives for Washington coastal coho stocks is attached. Under the heading "Conservation Objective", the table contains the following text for Queets coho:

MSY range of 5,800 to 14,500 natural adult spawners (Lestelle et al. 1984) or annual target agreed to by WDFW and the Quinault Indian Nation.

Under the heading "Subject to Council Actions to Prevent Overfishing", the table contains the following text for Queets coho:

Yes. Conservation alert or overfishing concern based on fewer than 5,800 natural spawners.

An excerpt from Table 2-3 of Draft Amendment 14 (Chapter 2) is attached. This table assesses the expected frequency of overfishing concerns under the options proposed for Amendment 14. For Queets coho, the table notes the MSY range of 5,800 to 14,500 spawners as the annual objective and lists 1996 as the last year in which the objective was achieved.

In completing its assessment of final Amendment 14, the Council staff has characterized the overfishing concern as being triggered by a failure to meet the conservation objectives based on MSY, maximum sustainable production (MSP), or a spawner floor as noted for some harvest rate objectives (i.e., Klamath and Washington coastal chinook). The amendment does not characterize or specifically state that certain Washington stocks do not trigger the overfishing concern unless they fail to meet the annual target agreed upon by WDFW and the tribes for three consecutive years.

The language of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and National Standard Guidelines (NSGs) is specific as to achieving MSY over the long-term. The Council considered and rejected establishing a criteria below MSY from which to assess overfishing. Rather than adopting the standard proposed in the NSGs of 50% of MSY in any one year, the Council chose to assess overfishing against MSY and a failure to meet that more conservative target in three consecutive years.

PFMC
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