

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Jim Lone

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Donald O. McIsaac

August 3, 2000

Ms. Pearl Capoeman-Baller, President
Quinault Indian Nation
PO Box 189
Taholah, WA 98587

Mr. Phil Anderson, Special Assistant to the Director
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way N
Olympia, WA 98501-1091

Dear Ms. Capoeman-Baller and Mr. Anderson:

At its June 2000 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) discussed the implications of Amendment 14 to the salmon fishery management plan (FMP) for the management of Queets wild coho. The spawner escapement of this stock has met the annual management target agreed to by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Quinault Indian Nation (under U.S. District Court orders) in at least one of the past three years and; therefore, does not trigger an overfishing concern under the Council's current salmon FMP. However, the spawner escapement has fallen short of the lower end of the maximum sustainable yield range (5,800-14,500) for three consecutive years. The Council believes this failure will trigger the overfishing concern process developed under the more conservative management of Amendment 14 in conformance with the Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA) of 1996 (see attached excerpt from the amendment).

Under Amendment 14, the Queets coho are expected to trigger an overfishing concern. However, the stock is not automatically designated as "overfished". The determination of the actual stock status is dependent on the conclusions of an assessment by the Salmon Technical Team (STT). Council recommendations for any management changes resulting from the assessment would have an initial impact in the 2002 salmon fishing season. Please refer to Section 3.2.3.2 in the attached excerpt of Amendment 14 for details of the assessment process.

To anticipate the actions which may become necessary under Amendment 14, the Council requests the Quinault Indian Nation and WDFW begin assembling information to assist the STT in completing an overfishing assessment of the Queets wild coho stock by September 1, 2001. As required by the SFA, Amendment 14 provides for one year in which the Council must develop a FMP amendment or propose regulations which will prevent or end overfishing and rebuild any stock which has triggered the overfishing concern.

By anticipating the initiation of the overfishing concern later this year, the Council hopes to allow ample time for the STT to review the status of the Queets coho stock and develop appropriate management recommendations. We encourage WDFW and the Quinault Indian Nation to expeditiously identify the appropriate entities and staff to begin assembling the appropriate data and to help coordinate and schedule the assessment effort with the STT through its chairman.

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The Council will include a progress report on the STT assessment at the October/November 2000 Council meeting in Portland, Oregon. As the Council review process progresses, the public will be afforded opportunity to provide comments and input to any conclusions or management recommendations which are developed.

We greatly appreciate your assistance in this matter and look forward to a productive effort to address Council concerns consistent with the management needs of the Queets River coho resource. If you have any questions or suggestions for implementing the process, please contact Dr. John Coon of the Council staff.

Sincerely,



Jim Lone
Chair

JCC:rdh

Enclosure

c: Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
Salmon Technical Team
Mr. Russell Svec, Makah Fisheries Management