

IDENTIFICATION OF STOCKS NOT MEETING ESCAPEMENT GOALS FOR THREE CONSECUTIVE YEARS

The Salmon Technical Team is responsible for identifying natural salmon stocks with conservation objectives that have failed to achieve their escapement objectives for the past 3 years. Amendment 14 identifies three exceptions to the application of the overfishing criteria: (1) Hatchery Stocks; (2) Natural stocks with low impacts from Council fisheries; and (3) Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed stocks. Hatchery stocks are excepted, because they generally do not need the protection of overfishing criteria and special Council rebuilding programs. Natural stocks with minimal Council impacts are excepted, because the Council's ability to directly affect the escapements of these stocks through harvest restrictions is virtually nil. ESA listed stocks are exempted, because the Council considers the jeopardy standards and recovery plans developed by NMFS to be interim rebuilding plans. Table B-2 from Preseason Report I shows that 3 chinook stocks have not met their goals for 3 consecutive years. These stocks are:

Upper Columbia River summer Chinook
Grays Harbor fall Chinook
Queets spring/summer Chinook

These three stocks are exceptions under the second criteria. The STT believes that Council area fisheries continue to exert exploitation rates below 5%.

Possible causes for the failure of these stocks to meet escapement goals vary by stock.

For the Columbia Summer stock, the escapement goal of 80 to 90 thousand adults at Bonneville Dam has not been achieved since 1969. Inriver harvest has been limited to small ceremonial and subsistence fisheries since 1964. Spawning habitat of this stock has been severely reduced through dam construction (most of the historic spawning habitat was lost with the construction of Grand Coulee dam in the 1930s). Until upstream habitat is restored for this stock, the escapement goal may be reached once in several decades, but not on a continuous basis. The 2001 adult escapement of 76,200 at Bonneville dam is the closest to the escapement goal in 31 years, more than double the average escapement of 22,900 between 1970 and 2000. The forecast for 2002 is for a return and escapement similar to that observed in 2001.

For Grays Harbor fall Chinook, state and tribal managers are investigating abundance forecasts and terminal fishery management models for evidence of potential bias.

Production of Queets spring/summer chinook has been depressed in recent years; terminal run sizes have been below the escapement floor since 1997. The reason for the depressed production is not known at this time.

PFMC
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