

## 2003 SALMON SEASON OPENINGS IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON PRIOR TO MAY 1

The *2002 Federal Regulations for West Coast Salmon Fisheries* indicate the Council will consider inseason recommendations to open commercial seasons for all salmon except coho prior to May 1 in areas north of Cape Falcon. When this subject was discussed at the March 2002 Council meeting, NMFS indicated that opening fisheries prior to May 1 may require reinitiation of consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for impacts associated with listed species, including Columbia Basin spring chinook stocks. The purpose of this report is to remind interested parties to provide notice at the November Council meeting if they intend to request an early opening, so the Council could then direct the Salmon Technical Team (STT) to perform an appropriate analysis.

Prior to 2002, recreational and commercial salmon seasons in Oregon between Cape Falcon and Humbug Mt. opened April 1. In 2002, those seasons and the commercial season between Humbug Mt. and the Oregon/California border opened March 20. The early opening was designed to allow access to abundant chinook stocks before coho contact rates increased later in the season. Catch in the commercial fishery between Cape Falcon and Humbug Mt. was substantial during March 2002 (see below), while effort in the Brookings area was minor. No directed recreational salmon effort was observed during March, although the early opening was not anticipated and occurred on relatively short notice.

March 2002 Oregon commercial troll salmon effort and catch.

Area	Effort (Boat Days)	Chinook Catch
Tillamook	13	131
Newport	186	3,938
Coos Bay	168	2,593
Brookings	3	5
Total	370	6,667

The *2002 Federal Regulations for West Coast Salmon Fisheries* specify that for the 2003 non-Indian commercial salmon fisheries between Cape Falcon and the Oregon/California border and for the recreational salmon fishery between Cape Falcon and Humbug Mt., the season will open March 15, and the openings could be modified following review at the November 2002 Council meeting. The purpose of this report is to remind the Council of those opening dates and of the opportunity to modify those openings at this Council meeting.