

PSC SUMMARY REVIEW

The Pacific Salmon Commission met from January 12th-16th in Portland, Oregon and from Feb. 9th-13th in Vancouver, BC. The January meeting was the post-season meeting and the February meeting was the 19th annual meeting of the PSC.

The 2003-2004 PSC cycle marked the re-invigoration of the Southern Panel. This panel oversees management issues surrounding coho, chinook, and chum stocks that originate from river systems south of Cape Caution. The Southern Panel spent most of this cycle on the negotiation of a new southern chum management plan. The new Chum Agreement will be in effect through 2008 or until the replacement of Annex IV, Chapter 6 related to chum salmon. The Southern Panel is responsible for continuation of policy oversight and guidance of the implementation tasks concerning the 2002 Coho Agreement.

Relative to the interest of the Pacific Fishery Management Council, there were two issues addressed. First, the review of the Regional Coho Planning Model was completed within the Pacific Salmon Commission process. Both countries have committed to begin utilizing this model within their respective domestic fishery planning processes. Consequently, this new version of the coho FRAM model should be utilized for our domestic planning activities this season.

The second issue involved the changing nature of the Canadian chinook fisheries off the West Coast of Vancouver Island (WCVI) in response to conservation concerns for Interior Fraser coho and WCVI Chinook stocks. In-season adjustment measures, such as closures of areas with high incidence of stocks of conservation concern to Canada, are expected to continue in 2004 and should permit Canada to approach the catch level of chinook allowable under the 1999 PST Agreement (the allowable catch level will be determined once calibration of the PSC Chinook Model has been completed). The shift in the seasonal catch distribution pattern and its potential effect on U.S. stocks was discussed with the Canadian representatives. A commitment was made to provide further data regarding this new fishing pattern and a more accurate exchange of pre-season expectations at the up-coming Manager-to-Manager Meeting. This annual meeting was established in 1999 to provide for a pre-season exchange of stock status and expectations of anticipated fishery structure.

The 2004 Manager-Manager meeting is scheduled for next Monday, March 15, at the Upper Skagit Hotel and Conference Center. This year, the intent is to exchange preseason expectations of stock status and anticipated fishery structure that can readily be incorporated into model inputs. It is anticipated that the Canadian stock status and fishery structure will be similar to last year. Thompson coho remains in critical status and conservation concerns still exist over the lower Georgia Strait and WCVI chinook stocks. These concerns will shape the 2004 Canadian fisheries.

The co-managers will confer with the Salmon Technical Team regarding the information that is received at the March 15 meeting with Canadian representatives. It is anticipated that any new information obtained on the Canadian fishing levels and structure will be incorporated into our domestic pre-season planning efforts as appropriate.

Other items addressed by the PSC include:

Revision of the Terms of Reference for the Selective Fishery Evaluation Committee to increase emphasis on a clearinghouse and advisory role for consideration of mass marking and mark selective fishing proposals;

Continued deliberations by the Chinook Interface Group on moving from catch-based to total mortality based regimes for Aggregate Abundance Based Management Regimes; and

Continued organization of a small workshop to be convened this June for the purpose of addressing concerns over the capacity of the coded wire tag system to provide information required for chinook and coho management.

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