

Canada – U.S. Manager-to-Manager Meeting Summary

The 2004 Manager-to-Manager meeting was held March 15 at the Upper Skagit Hotel and Conference Center in Mount Vernon, WA. Information exchanged at the meeting included season outlooks and proposed fishing regimes. The U.S. provided a summary of the 2004 forecasts for coho and chinook and the ocean salmon fishery options adopted by the Council in March for public comment. In addition, presentations were provided by WDFW on coho abundance forecasting and smolt trapping programs and summary information from the monitoring program for the Strait of Juan de Fuca Area 5 & 6 chinook mark selective fishery conducted last summer.

The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (CDFO) reported that the status of natural stocks anticipated to drive their fisheries was expected to be similar to last year, although specific forecasts were still undergoing review through the Pacific Stock Assessment Review Committee process. Marine survival for coho is still projected to be low for production from Georgia Strait and the Fraser River. Specifically, Thompson coho remains in low status and conservation concerns still exist over the lower Georgia and West Coast of Vancouver Island (WCVI) chinook stocks. Preliminary expectations for stock abundance and fisheries were shared using FRAM input file structures to facilitate data exchange. Following the Manager-to-Manager meeting, CDFO provided updated abundance forecasts; these forecasts have already been utilized within the North of Falcon process.

The Canadian preseason planning process does not conclude until June so only general expectations were discussed regarding their fishing plans. The 2004 Canadian fisheries are anticipated to be shaped around the management concerns for Thompson coho and WCVI chinook. For coho, expectations are that fishing opportunity will be increased over last year, with an additional month of mark selective fishing in the Area 20 recreational fishery and retention of marked (ad-clipped) fish during summer openings and both marked and unmarked fish after October 1 in the WCVI troll fishery. CDFO's coho management objective remains to limit the overall exploitation rate by Canadian fisheries to 3% on the Interior Fraser (including Thompson) management unit.

For chinook, the management approach and fishing pattern is expected to be similar to 2003. Limited recreational opportunity is anticipated in Georgia Strait with fishing centered in terminal areas forecasted with good returns. The WCVI troll fishery is again expected to be moved offshore and operate with a 55cm minimum size limit. The WCVI troll and outside recreational fisheries are expected to harvest the full catch allowable under the 1999 Agreement of the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC). U.S. representatives expressed concerns over the uncertain impacts of Canada's recent troll fishing pattern on U.S. stocks, emphasizing the difficulty this was creating for U.S. domestic fishery planning processes. Representatives from CDFO committed to obtain data necessary to provide improved estimates of stock composition of the WCVI troll catch. Discussion of this issue will continue again in the fall commencing with next year's PSC meetings.