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-09-04 07:56A PCFFA/IFR

*Zeke Grader  
and  
Peter Huttula*

**PACIFIC COAST FEDERATION  
of FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS**

Chuck Wise  
President  
David Birts  
Vice-President  
Larry Miyamura  
Secretary  
Marlyse Battistella  
Treasurer  
**In Memoriam:**  
Nathaniel S. Bingham  
Harold C. Christensen

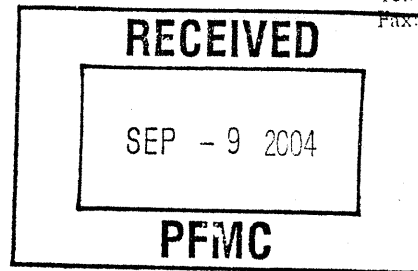
W.F. "Zeke" Grader, Jr.  
Executive Director  
Glen H. Spain  
Northwest Regional Director  
Mitch Farro  
Fishery Enhancement Director  
Vivian Bolin  
Watershed Conservation Director  
Duncan MacLean  
Salmon Advisor

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9 September 2004



Dr. Donald McIsaac, Executive Director  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200  
Portland, OR 97220-1384

RE: Planning For Any Potential Cutbacks/Closures of 2005 Ocean Salmon Fishery

Dear Dr. McIsaac:

The Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA), representing working men and women in the west coast commercial fishing fleet, respectfully requests the Pacific Council, at its upcoming 12-17 September meeting in San Diego, discuss: 1) Council plans, if any, to deal with potential closures or severe cutbacks in the ocean salmon fishery in 2005 that may be necessitated by the 2002 fish kill on the Klamath, including either requests for disaster relief or alternative salmon fisheries; and 2) Council requests, if any, to the Department of Commerce and the federal administration, for assistance in addressing a potential closure or severe fishing cutback for the ocean salmon fishery in 2005 that may result from the 2002 Klamath fish kill.

As you know, the predictions announced at the March Council meeting for Klamath 3-year old fall-chinook are for the second lowest run on record. Although it will not be known until late this winter, based on counts, whether this prediction was accurate or not (many past predictions have underestimated abundance), if the prediction is anywhere near accurate the impact on the ocean salmon fishery in 2005 will be severe under current management regimes. A season-long closure from the Columbia River to Monterey Bay is one of the scenarios on the table, we understand, if the predictions for Klamath fall-run chinook are near accurate. Such a closure, or even something not quite as severe, amounts to a *de facto* closing of the Pacific salmon fishery, since in most years production south of Monterey Bay is small and the fishery offshore Washington is highly constrained due to some weak stocks (e.g., listed Snake River chinook) and tribal treaty fisheries. Such a closure would come at a time when most other Pacific salmon stocks, harvested by commercial and recreational fishermen, are at near-record abundance levels for recent years.

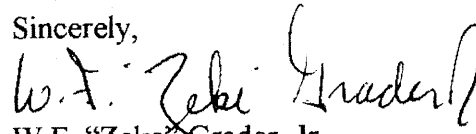
Dr. Donald McIsaac  
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Given the fact that we have predictions for extremely low Klamath numbers, which were hardly unexpected following the kill of Klamath outmigrating juvenile salmon in the spring of 2002 (in addition to the kill of some 60,000 to 80,000 adult spawners late that summer) due to the refusal by the Department of Interior to provide water releases to the river needed for fish survival, it is not then unreasonable to expect that in March of next year when the Council begins developing its management measures for the 2005 ocean salmon season, that severe cutbacks if not a total closure of a large swath of the coast will be on the table. The prudent action would be to begin planning now for the worst event. Planning for alternative fishing scenarios or designing a disaster relief program for the impacted fisheries takes time and waiting until next March until addressing the matter would be highly irresponsible.

If the Council acts, or at least gives direction to staff, including requests to the federal government, at this meeting, it will give us barely six months to develop a program for addressing salmon closures or severe fishing cutbacks, or even alternative fishing scenarios, should they be necessary next March. To do nothing now, or simply wait until after November to avoid embarrassment to the Department of Interior which was directly responsible for the 2002 fish kills, would be folly and simply add to the drumbeat of those seeking to do away with the regional fishery management council system.

We recognize this issue is not on your agenda for September, but surely room can be made for it under public discussion items, so that no further delay in action will be necessary. We will be happy to have someone at the Council San Diego meeting to discuss this issue further. Your attention and that of the Pacific Council to this appreciated. Attached is a copy of the letter PCFFA sent the President on 14 July; to date, there has been no reply.

Sincerely,



W.F. "Zeke" Grader, Jr.  
Executive Director

WFG: rtd

Attachment: 14 July 2004 letter to U.S. President George W. Bush

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 Sid Bitts  
*Vice-President*  
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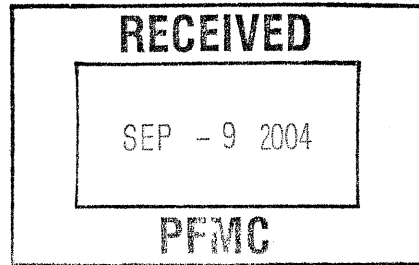
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14 July 2004



The Honorable George W. Bush  
 President of the United States  
 The White House  
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
 Washington, DC 20500

**RE: Request for Disaster Assistance for Pacific Coastal and Tribal Communities Resulting from  
 2002 Klamath River Salmon Kills**

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to request the immediate preparation and plan for implementation of an economic disaster relief program for the Pacific coast salmon fishery, the affected fishing communities, and the Tribes and businesses along the Klamath River, that will face economic devastation in 2005, and perhaps 2006, as a result of anticipated salmon fishery closures from the Columbia River in Oregon to Monterey Bay in California. These closures will be necessitated by the projected record low levels of Klamath River fall chinook salmon for those years. Based on all available credible evidence, Klamath salmon populations suffered severe losses as a direct result of low flows in the Klamath River during 2002, including a massive kill of downstream migrating juvenile salmon that spring and a large kill of returning spawning adult salmon late that summer (the largest such kill on record) coupled with the poor survival of the progeny of those fish that did spawn in the fall of 2002.

We believe federal disaster relief for the businesses and communities that will be affected by these fishery closures is appropriate. The low flows causing the fish kill were the direct result of actions taken by the federal Klamath Irrigation Project, operated by the Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, which diverted water from the river that year that was needed for fish survival. That low flows were a major factor in the 2002 fish kill has been confirmed in reports by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish & Game and every credible scientific investigation of the event.

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The Klamath River, including the Trinity River and the other tributaries, is the third largest salmon producing system along the U.S. west coast, following the Columbia -Snake, and Sacramento-San Joaquin systems. Salmon produced in the Klamath include spring and fall-run chinook and coho, along with steelhead. Klamath chinook are harvested along the Pacific Coast, mostly offshore Oregon and northern and central California. These fish support Tribal ceremonial, subsistence and commercial fisheries on the mainstem Klamath and Trinity Rivers and an in-river recreational fishery which is a major source of income that local businesses - including resorts, campgrounds and guides - depend upon. The Klamath fishery generates millions of dollars in revenue for local and state economies and affects and limits access (as explained below) to a Pacific salmon fishery worth hundreds of millions of dollars and employing thousands, at-sea and ashore.

The Pacific salmon fishery in ocean waters is a "mixed stock" fishery where salmon from a number of different river systems mix in the ocean and are harvested together. Ocean harvest of salmon has the advantage of producing the highest quality of salmon over the longest period in a year. However, the management and regulation of the Pacific salmon fishery occurring in ocean waters offshore Washington, Oregon and California, is based, in part, on the health of 4-year old Klamath River fall-run chinook, particularly that area of coast extending from central Oregon to central California (known as the "Klamath Management Zone" ) where most Klamath stocks migrate and are harvested.

In mixed stock fisheries, ocean salmon fisheries are based on what is known as "weak stock" management, meaning fishing regulations are set to protect the weakest, or least abundant, salmon populations. This important conservation measure often means forgoing harvests on abundant populations in order to assure adequate spawning escapement of the weakest runs. Weak stock management has prevented any potential overfishing of salmon stocks in the ocean. The Pacific salmon fishery is managed additionally to meet the Klamath in-river Tribal allocation of up to 50 percent of the harvestable Klamath fall-run chinooks, as well as provide for the in-river recreational fishery.

Klamath stocks are not major contributors to the ocean salmon fishery. Depending on the area and time of year they can account for less than one percent and up to 10 percent of the ocean catch (contrasted with Sacramento-origin stocks which account for about 85 to 90 percent of the catch off California and Oregon). However, catch regulations to comply with Klamath in-river allocations and meet natural spawning escapement goals of the fish for that river have caused severe restrictions on the coastal salmon fishery, particularly in southern Oregon and northern California, in the past. Unfortunately there is no good way yet devised to completely avoid the catch of Klamath fish in ocean waters, even though their total contribution to the harvest is small. Thus, when Klamath salmon abundance levels are low, despite the abundance of all other stocks, west coast ocean salmon fisheries are faced with severe regulatory closures.

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Because of the reliance of so many on Klamath stocks - whether it be the fisheries in-river or the indirect affect on the ocean fishery access to abundant salmon populations - Tribes, commercial and recreational fishing groups together with agencies have worked hard to rebuild Klamath and other salmon stocks along the west coast. In recent years we have benefited, too, from unusually good oceanic conditions that have resulted in better at-sea survival of the salmon stocks as well as larger and more robust fish. Although there is still much to be done, salmon populations have rebounded strongly from where they were a decade ago. State and Federal salmon restoration programs, actions taken under the Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act, the efforts of the tribes and NGOs, and good ocean conditions have all had positive contributions. Even the markets of our Pacific wild salmon have rebounded and our fish are taking back the markets from the imported farm salmon. U.S.-caught wild Pacific salmon are once again being exported to European markets.

All the progress that has been made over the past decade, however, is about to be lost because of the 2002 Klamath fish kill. The projected abundance of this year's 3-year old (the fish affected by the spring kill in 2002) Klamath fall chinook is the second lowest on record. If that projection, made by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Pacific Fishery Management Council, is accurate, which we should know sometime late this year, it means there will not even be enough fish to meet minimum natural spawning escapement requirements in the Klamath basin. Since the fishery is managed on the basis of the abundance of 4-year olds, this means for 2005 there will likely be a total closure of fishing on the Klamath River and a closure of the ocean salmon fishery that could extend from the Columbia River in the north to Monterey Bay in the south. Moreover, if the evidence is correct that there was poor survival of the progeny (due to stress on the fish from the low flows ) of the 2002 fall spawners, a closure of equal magnitude in 2006 is a very real possibility.

It should also be pointed out here that the impending fishery closures are not a result of Endangered Species Act (ESA) implementation. Klamath fall chinook are not listed under the ESA and, until the 2002 fish kill, have been relatively abundant. Klamath River coho are listed under the ESA and their take is prohibited. Since these two species inhabit the same river, however, actions taken under the ESA to protect and recover Klamath coho help the river's chinook populations.

The tragedy of the 2002 fish kill, and the consequent low numbers of 4-year old Klamath fish we are likely to see in 2005 and 2006, is that it all could have been avoided had the Bureau of Reclamation released the water requested by the fishery scientists, California agencies, the Tribes and fishing groups into the river to provide enough flow to help reduce temperatures, increase oxygen, and stop the crowding of the fish and spread of disease. Despite these pleas, the Bureau refused, apparently making a political decision that it would rather placate a few vociferous irrigators than save the communities and economies of those who depend on fish. Now these communities are faced with an economic disaster, including huge monetary losses for already economically distressed lower river and coastal communities and businesses,

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including the family fishermen our organization represents, all as a direct result of river water mismanagement by a Federal agency.

In January 2004 Secretary of Interior Gail Norton announced a multi-million dollar relief package for Klamath Basin irrigators, but nothing to address the pending impacts that will be felt by the down-river and coastal communities in 2005 and 2006 resulting from the Bureau's water allocation actions in 2002. We are not insensitive to the problems faced by Klamath Basin irrigators as a result of the Klamath Irrigation Project's water delivery curtailments of 2001, but in the middle of the worst drought in 72 years that water simply wasn't there absent a violation of Tribal water rights and public trust obligations to protect the fisheries. However, there was much more water available in 2002 than in 2001. Since the Bureau of Reclamation simply refused to meet the water needs of the fish in 2002, the economic damages that will result to those who depended on those fish for their livelihoods should be met in 2005 and 2006.

We respectfully request the immediate action now by your administration to address the economic devastation that will be likely be visited upon Klamath River Tribes, in-river businesses, coastal fishing communities and fishing men and women throughout much of the west coast unless some form of relief is developed now for implementation in 2005 and beyond in anticipation of what are almost certainly going to be severe salmon fishery closures.

We will be happy to work with members of your administration to develop a plan to address these critical economic problems facing Klamath River Tribes as well as coastal businesses and communities in Oregon and California resulting from the 2002 disaster.

Sincerely,

W.F. "Zeke" Grader, Jr.  
Executive Director

WFG.rtd

Cc: The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California  
The Honorable Ted Kulongoski, Governor of Oregon  
The Honorable Donald Evans, Secretary of Commerce  
The Honorable Gordon Smith, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Ron Wyden, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Mike Thompson, U.S. House of Representatives

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The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
The Honorable Lynn Woolsey  
The Honorable Earl Blumenauer  
The Honorable Sam Farr  
The Honorable Darlene Hooley  
The Honorable Anna Eshoo  
The Honorable David Wu  
The Honorable Lois Capps  
The Honorable George Miller  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

attachments

