

SALMON TECHNICAL TEAM REPORT ON IDENTIFICATION OF STOCKS NOT MEETING CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

The Salmon Technical Team (STT) is required to identify to the Council natural stocks of Chinook and coho that have failed to meet their conservation objective in recent years.

As Table E.1.b shows, the only stock which has failed to achieve its escapement goal in the past three consecutive years is Queets Spring/summer Chinook. However, this stock is an exception to the overfishing criteria. Therefore, the Council should 1) confirm that harvest impacts in Council fisheries continue to be less than five percent, 2) identify the probable causes of the stock depression, 3) continue to monitor the stock status, and 4) advocate measures to improve stock productivity.

Since 1991, terminal returns of Queets Spring/summer Chinook have exceeded this floor only five times and the escapement floor has been achieved four times. Since 2000, in-river commercial and sport fisheries on this stock have been closed; with in-river harvests ranging from 2 to 17 fish per year for ceremonial purposes by the Quinault Nation. No data are available which are sufficient to provide direct estimates of impacts of Council fisheries on this stock. The tagging history of spring/summer Chinook stocks from the north Washington coast is very limited. Interpretation of the few coded-wire tag (CWT) studies pertaining to these runs are problematic because of small release sizes and mixtures of brood stocks (most tags were released from the Solduc Hatchery were mixtures of fish from the Eagle Creek, Cowlitz, and Umpqua Hatcheries). Recoveries of CWT releases involving progeny from brood stock taken from the Hoh River in the late 1970's and early 1980's strongly suggest that Washington coastal spring/summer Chinook are far north-migrating and unlikely to be significantly impacted by Council area fisheries. Queets spring/summer Chinook are not represented in the fishery regulation models employed by the Council, but it is believed that the stock would satisfy the minimal harvest exception provided in paragraph 3.4.2.2 of the Framework Plan.

The factors contributing to the decline of this stock are unknown. Council area and terminal fishery impacts appear to be negligible. Impacts of Canadian and Alaskan fisheries are more uncertain. With the exception of the Clearwater River tributary, virtually all the Queets River system lies within the Olympic National Park and is unaffected by logging and development. Habitat conditions on the Clearwater River have been affected by extensive logging of maturing second growth stands and associated road construction.

The Council may wish to request that Quinault Indian Nation and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife initiate an investigation to try to identify the causal factors responsible for the depressed condition of Queets spring/summer Chinook. Additional tagging studies are recommended to provide data to better evaluate and monitor fishery exploitation rates and patterns.

The salmon FMP also states that any stock projected preseason to fall short of its conservation objective triggers a Conservation Alert. The Conservation Alert requires the Council to notify pertinent fishery and habitat managers, request the cause be identified, and to close salmon fisheries within Council jurisdiction that impact the stock. If the stock has also not met its objectives in the previous two years the Council shall request the relevant state and tribal managers to complete a formal assessment of the factors leading to the shortfalls and report their conclusions to the Council no later than the next March Council meeting. As Table E.1.b shows, the Klamath Fall Chinook stock has not meet its escapement floor for the last two years and is projected to return below the 35,000 natural spawner floor, even in the absence of further fishing. Guidance received from NMFS indicates that in the absence of an emergency rule, the Council will be required to close ocean salmon fisheries impacting the Klamath fall Chinook stock between Cape Falcon, Oregon and Pt. Sur, California.

PFMC

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