

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
KLAMATH RIVER FALL CHINOOK (KRFC) STOCK ASSESSMENT AND
MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed and discussed the *Klamath Assessment of Factors Affecting Natural Area Escapement Shortfall of Klamath River Fall Chinook Salmon in 2004-2006* (Agenda Item D.3.b).

The report provides a good overview of the many serious, ongoing habitat problems in the Klamath Basin. The report also identifies co-mingling of hatchery and natural fish as a potential source of competition in the Klamath's limited freshwater and estuarine environments. As with Sacramento Chinook, there appears to be room for additional investigations into interactions between hatchery- and naturally-produced Chinook.

The twelve recommendations in the assessment are appropriately directed toward actions under Council authority. Unfortunately, many of the factors limiting production of Klamath fall Chinook involve freshwater habitat concerns that fall outside Council control.

With respect to the assessment's recommendations (page 62), the HC emphasizes Recommendation 10 (disease studies), and suggests that Recommendation 11 (tributary and mainstem production and survival) should include investigations into the effects of different hatchery production programs and alternative release strategies on natural fish within the system. The HC also notes that Recommendation 12 should be expanded to include input into the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process, and to provide essential fish habitat conservation recommendations to the consultation currently underway for the Klamath Irrigation Project.

Also, the HC heard a presentation from Phil Detrich (Klamath Issues Coordinator, USFWS) about the status of the draft settlement agreement, which is now available for public review (www.edsheets.com). Although the plan seems comprehensive, some parties believe it does not go far enough to protect and enhance conditions for salmon. The overarching problem still remains balancing the needs of fishes and other water users in both the upper and lower reaches of the basin.

PFMC
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