

SALMON TECHNICAL TEAM REPORT ON FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN  
AMENDMENTS TO IMPLEMENT ACL REQUIREMENTS

Status determination criteria currently defined in the Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) are ambiguous and need clarification. The current FMP provides definitions for status determination such as “conservation alert” or “overfishing concern,” but these do not align well with the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) requirements. Specifically, these status designations do not provide clear indication when overfishing is occurring, or when a stock is overfished. In addition, the FMP needs to provide a clear linkage between overfishing and overfished status determination and annual catch limits (ACLs) or overfishing limits (OFLs) that would be needed to prevent overfishing. Finally, acceptable biological catches or equivalent harvest rates do not explicitly account for scientific uncertainty, which are needed to set ACLs and prevent overfishing.

While this topic is under consideration, there are many conservation objectives in the FMP that may either be outdated, or at odds with current management of the stocks. Examples include Sacramento River fall Chinook, where the current conservation objective was adopted 25 years ago, and Puget Sound coho stocks that are currently managed under stepped harvest rates instead of the escapement goals described in the FMP.

The MSA includes exceptions from ACL and accountability measures (AM) requirements for stocks that are managed under international agreements. It appears likely that this exception may apply to all coho stocks and Chinook stocks from the mid-Oregon coast north, which are managed under limits determined through the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The rationale for exception under this provision of the MSA from ACL requirements should be clearly articulated in the FMP amendment on a stock-by-stock basis. If these stocks fall under the exception, the only stocks for which ACL requirements would apply would be Sacramento River fall Chinook, Klamath River fall Chinook, and the southern portion of the Oregon coastal Chinook stocks.

For stocks that do not fall under the exceptions specified in the MSA, it may make sense to develop ACLs in terms of spawning escapement rather than catch. While the National Standard 1 (NS1) guidelines allow for flexibility in implementing these new requirements, the explicit arguments relating current conservation objectives, expressed in terms of spawning escapements, to the ACL requirements and NS1 guidelines, which are expressed in terms of catch or mortality, have not yet been made.

PFMC  
03/11/09