

CURRENT HABITAT ISSUES

The Habitat Committee (HC) will meet on Thursday, September 13, 2012, to discuss salmon and groundfish essential fish habitat, hatchery issues, the Lower Columbia Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan, the potential National Marine Sanctuary expansion into some marine waters off San Francisco Bay, and other topics.

At the June Council meeting, the Council elected to send a letter to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar on the need to avoid a Klamath fish kill. The original letter, and a reply from the Bureau of Reclamation, are attached (Attachments 1 and 2).

Council Action:

- 1. Consider comments and recommendations developed by the HC at its September 2012 meeting.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 1: Council letter to the Secretary of the Interior.
2. Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 2: Reply from Donald Glaser, Bureau of Reclamation.
3. Agenda Item D.1.b, Supplemental HC Report.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Report of the Habitat Committee
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Consider Habitat Committee Recommendations

Jennifer Gilden
Joel Kawahara

PFMC
08/22/12



Pacific Fishery Management Council

7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101, Portland, OR 97220-1384
Phone 503-820-2280 | Toll free 866-806-7204 | Fax 503-820-2299 | www.pcouncil.org
Dan Wolford, Chairman | Donald O. McIsaac, Executive Director

May 15, 2012

The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Action Requested to Prevent Klamath River Fish Kill

Dear Secretary Salazar:

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is concerned that potential low flows in the Klamath River will substantially affect salmon essential fish habitat (EFH) and potentially create conditions leading to a fish kill in the Klamath River during the fall Chinook migration in 2012, such as occurred in 2002. The purpose of this letter is to recommend advance planning for stored water releases this fall so as to prevent such an occurrence.

As you know, the Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (MSA), and recommends management actions for Federal fisheries off Washington, Oregon and California. The MSA includes provisions to identify, conserve, and enhance EFH for species regulated under a Council fisheries management plan. Each Council is authorized under MSA to comment on any Federal or state activity that may affect the habitat, including EFH, of a fishery resource under its authority. Furthermore, for activities that the Council believes are likely to substantially affect the habitat of an anadromous fishery resource under its authority, the Council is obligated to provide comments and recommendations (MSA §305(b)(3)).

Forecasted Flows

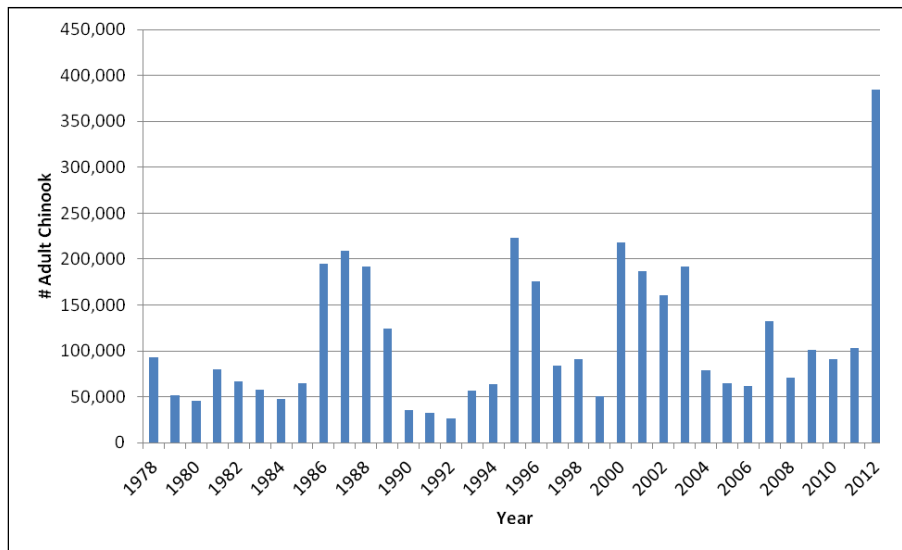
Precipitation during the past several weeks has substantially improved hydrologic conditions for the Klamath Basin; forecasted summer flows have gone from extremely dry in early March to nearly normal in mid-April. However, given that the projection for the fall Chinook run is much larger than any time since comprehensive records were first taken in 1978, and there are water management decisions to be made between this point and September, we remain concerned that sufficient flow be provided in the lower river to minimize conditions similar to those that led to the September 2002 fish kill, when more than 33,000 adult salmon died in the Lower Klamath River.

We recommend you pursue all necessary measures to ensure an adequate amount of additional water will be available for release from the Trinity and/or Upper Klamath basins during the peak migration and holding timeframe for the fall Chinook return. Such flow augmentation should be designed to maintain the quality of salmon EFH and minimize the likelihood of another fish kill, taking into consideration the river flow patterns and salmon abundance that resulted in the 2002 fish kill. Therefore, we recommend that the Department of Interior work with the Klamath Basin’s biologists and scientists, such as the Trinity River Restoration Program’s Flow Group, to determine the best manner for using this water to minimize the potential for another fish kill.

Forecasted Run Size

The 2012 fall Chinook escapement is projected to be much larger than any other year since 1978. Ocean fishery modeling, including projections of the number of fish returning to the Klamath Basin, will continue through April, but the Council’s Salmon Technical Team’s preliminary Klamath Ocean Harvest Model estimate indicates that over 380,000 adult fish will return to the Klamath River, nearly 2.4 times the 2002 adult run size associated with the 2002 fish kill. Several analyses, including one produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service¹, concluded that low river flow and high densities of fish contributed to the outbreak of two diseases (Ich and columnaris) that caused the 2002 fish kill.

The figure below contains the post-season estimated Klamath River adult fall Chinook run sizes for 1978 – 2011 and the projected abundance for 2012.



In closing, the Council recommends that the Department of the Interior initiate planning how to take all necessary steps in the coming months to ensure sufficient water is available to minimize the potential for another fish kill if conditions in the Klamath River are predicted to become, or become, dangerous to migrating Chinook salmon in the late summer and fall of 2012. We would appreciate hearing about such planning, and offer our assistance in any way possible.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

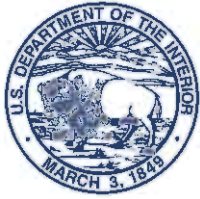
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. O. McIsaac", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

D. O. McIsaac, Ph.D.
Executive Director

JDG:kam

C: Council Members
Mr. Samuel Rauch
Mr. Alan Reisenhoover
Mr. Will Stelle
Mr. Rod McInnis
Habitat Committee
Salmon Advisory Subpanel
Salmon Technical Team

¹ Guillen, G.J. 2003. Klamath River Fish Die-off: September 2002: Report on Causative Factors. AFWO 03-03. USFWS. Arcata, California



United States Department of the Interior

Agenda Item D.1.a
Attachment 2
September 2012

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Mid-Pacific Regional Office
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825-1898

RECEIVED

IN REPLY REFER TO:

MP-100
ADM-1.10

JUL 09 2012

JUL 02 2012

PFMC

Mr. Donald O. McIsaac, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Dear Dr. McIsaac:

On behalf of Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, I am responding to your letter of May 15, 2012, recommending that the Department of the Interior provide supplementary flows to prevent a fish die-off in the Lower Klamath River similar to that which occurred in 2002. I apologize for the delay in this response.

The Bureau of Reclamation is committed to assisting with measures to help preserve this year's Klamath River fall Chinook run. Included in this commitment is our willingness to release additional water to the Lower Klamath River, if necessary, provided that the justification for such a release is based on scientifically supportable criteria.

Therefore, Reclamation has reviewed the Pacific Fishery Management Council's 2012 Preseason Report and Stock Abundance Analysis, and we have discussed the implications at length with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service, and other Trinity River Restoration Program (Program) partners. Over the past several months, Program partners and Klamath River Basin interests have collaborated to refine the monitoring criteria and response measures developed in 2003-2004 and further developed in 2008-2009 when hydrologic conditions initially appeared similar to those of 2002. This effort has been coordinated through the Program's Flow Work Group (Group), consisting of representatives from partner agencies. The Group's preventative criteria recommend a minimum flow rate in the Lower Klamath River during the return period, along with active monitoring of fish density and disease precursors. The Group also developed emergency release criteria, recommending that flows be increased above the base rate if monitoring indicates certain risk factors.

Of note, the September 2012 target flow rate below Iron Gate Dam, consistent with the 2010 Biological Opinion for Operation of the Klamath Project, is 1,028 cubic feet per second (cfs), an increase from the 2002 average flow rate of 760 cfs that immediately preceded the fish die-off. As you stated in your letter, hydrologic conditions in both the Klamath and Trinity River Basins have improved significantly since early March. We will take advantage of the improved hydrology and the Group's diligence to facilitate meeting our commitment to release additional water if necessary.

Should you require additional information, please contact Mr. Brian Person, Area Manager, Northern California Area Office, at 530-275-1554.

Sincerely,



FOR Donald R. Glaser
Regional Director

cc: Council Members
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Mr. Samuel Rauch
Deputy Assistant Administrator for
Regulatory Programs
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration Fisheries Service
Silver Spring Metro Center 3
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Mr. Alan Reisenhoover
Director
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration Fisheries Service
Silver Spring Metro Center 3
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Mr. Will Stelle
Regional Administrator
Northwest Region
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration Fisheries Service
7600 Sand Point Way, N.E. Bin C15700
Seattle, WA 98115

Continued on next page.

cc: Continued from previous page.

Mr. Rod McInnis
Regional Administrator
Southwest Region
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration Fisheries Service
501 W. Ocean Boulevard, Room 1210
Long Beach, CA 90802-4213

Habitat Committee
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Salmon Advisory Subpanel
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Salmon Technical Team
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT

SANCTUARY EXPANSION

The Habitat Committee (HC) heard about a proposed action by the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) for a boundary adjustment to Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS)¹ that would include an area currently excluded from MBNMS off the coast of San Mateo County. This area is also known as the “donut hole,” and extends from the Golden Gate Bridge to Pacifica, CA and offshore approximately six miles.

This area was excluded from MBNMS during sanctuary designation in 1992 because of concerns related to sewage discharges, high vessel traffic, and dredge spoil disposal. The GFNMS Advisory Council has determined that these concerns are no longer valid, given improvements in effluent water quality, increasing numbers of marine mammals and sharks in these waters, and other developments. Therefore, the GFNMS has requested that Sanctuary staff initiate a process to include the excluded area within the boundaries of MBNMS.

A *Federal Register* notice with a Notice of Intent was issued on August 7, 2012 requesting public comments on the scope of issues to be included in the environmental analyses for this proposed action. The deadline for public comment on the Notice of Intent is October 10, 2012. The Sanctuary’s proposed timeline for release of the draft EIS and proposed rule is March to April 2013.

The HC recommends the Council forward the following scoping comments to GFNMS.

Comments:

“The boundary adjustment could provide additional habitat protection for Council-managed species from non-fishing impacts, such as potential marine hydrokinetic projects. However, there are already many protective federal and state statutes and regulations in place for the area in question. We request the environmental analyses provide an overview of what additional habitat protections will be provided due to the proposed action.”

¹ GFNMS manages the area of MBNMS north of the San Mateo/Santa Cruz County line.

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
CURRENT HABITAT ISSUES

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) agrees with the statement generated by the Habitat Committee regarding Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's plan to include the "Doughnut Hole" within their boundaries.

PFMC
09/14/12