

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

REVIEW OF 2015 IN-RIVER COHO FISHERIES

Since 2009, ODFW has coordinated closely with NOAA Fisheries to provide limited in-river terminal harvest opportunities for Oregon Coast Natural (OCN) coho in select river systems, depending on annual status of returns. This began in 2009 with very small, quota-driven fisheries in four systems. In 2015, fisheries occurred in 12 systems. ODFW maintains a conservative approach when considering whether a fishery can occur, and if so, at what magnitude.

In 2009, PFMC Salmon FMP Amendment 13 (A13) fishery specifications varied across the three sub-aggregates comprising the ESU. In that year, ODFW developed a Fishery Evaluation and Management Plan (FMEP) for in-river fisheries that allowed for the usage of A13 impact limits at the sub-aggregate scale, and that approach drove the establishment of 2009 in-river coho fisheries.

From 2010-2014, the sub-aggregates were consistently within the same cell of the A13 impact matrix. During these years, ODFW and NOAA Fisheries coordinated on fishery approaches that were fully contained within the PFMC process for allocating impacts. A 2011 letter from NOAA Fisheries to ODFW confirmed that under these circumstances, in-river fisheries could be established within the overall PFMC-approved impact limits each year, without consideration of the additional requirements contained within the ODFW in-river FMEP.

In 2015, A13 sub-aggregate limits again differed across the ESU. The rates were 15% for the Northern sub-aggregate, 20% for North-Central, and 30% for South-Central. PFMC fisheries were constrained to conform to the most limiting sub-aggregate. A total exploitation rate of 14.5% was established in the PFMC process for 2015; with 11.0% established for ocean fisheries and 3.5% for in-river fisheries (including non-retention mortality of OCN coho associated with co-occurring Chinook fisheries in many rivers). ODFW planned all Northern sub-aggregate in-river fisheries to remain within the 3.5% limit, and we did not conduct harvest fisheries for OCN coho in the Nehalem River due to poor status. Harvest opportunities in the Nestucca and Tillamook basins were constrained from prior years to remain within the 3.5% limit.

Parental seeding levels in the North-Central and South-Central sub-aggregates were higher in 2015, with the North-Central group classified as “medium” and the South-Central group as “high”. Accordingly, ODFW sought to conservatively utilize some of the additional impacts that could be provided under the FMEP in some areas. In the North-Central sub-aggregate, the FMEP would have allowed for a maximum impact (including ocean fisheries) of 20%, and in the South-Central sub-aggregate it would have allowed for 30%. Fisheries established by ODFW in these areas were planned to not exceed 20% in any individual river and averaged 16% (range 12.6 to 18.4). ODFW strove to leave some impacts unallocated to buffer against uncertainty in catch and run strength projections, and multiple fisheries were reduced compared to prior years to achieve this. In the South-Central sub-aggregate, these buffers were substantially higher, as we structured fisheries in this area to be consistent with a 20% rate, despite the sub-aggregate limit of 30%.

Estimated harvest was far less than planned in nearly every basin, with the exception of the Nestucca, where 36 more fish were caught than planned. In the remaining basins, only the Siuslaw approached the expected catch, with 86% of the pre-season planned catch actually harvested. The Siuslaw was also one of the only basins to see an actual return approaching 50% of the preseason forecast; nearly all other basins were around 30% of predicted.

Basin	Estimated Harvest (preliminary)	Planned Harvest
Nehalem	Closed	Closed
Tillamook	100	200
Nestucca	140	100
Siletz	30	290
Yaquina	55	410
Alsea	360	960
Beaver Creek	50	150
Siuslaw	1,225	1,430
Umpqua	650	2,000
Coos	250	1,090
Coquille	300	860
Floras Creek / New River	60	200
Tenmile	40	200
Sum	3,260	7,890

Overall, the Northern sub-aggregate is estimated to have sustained a 17% cumulative exploitation rate in 2015, compared to the limit of 15%. Total exploitation for the North-Central sub-aggregate was 21.4%, compared to the FMEP limit of 20%. The South-Central sub-aggregate was well within limits at an estimated cumulative impact of 18.7%, compared to the FMEP limit of 30%.