

SACRAMENTO RIVER WINTER CHINOOK WORKGROUP REPORT ON THE SACRAMENTO RIVER WINTER CHINOOK CONTROL RULE UPDATE

At the November 2015 meeting, the Council commissioned the Ad Hoc Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup (SRWCW) and asked them to explore alternative control rules for Sacramento River winter Chinook (SRWC). The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) indicated their interest in having a new control rule in place for use during the 2017 season setting process, but appreciated that this would require an aggressive development and review schedule.

The SRWCW met for the first time on March 8, 2016. The members include Mr. Brett Kormos (California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW]), Dr. Michael O'Farrell (NMFS, Southwest Fisheries Science Center [SWFSC]), Dr. Michael Mohr (SWFSC), Mr. Jason Roberts (CDFW), Mr. Jim Smith (United States Fish and Wildlife Service), Mr. Jeromy Jording (NMFS), and Dr. Peter Dygert (NMFS). Dr. Mike O'Farrell and Dr. Peter Dygert will serve as co-chairs.

The current control rule for Endangered Species Act listed SRWC has been in place since 2012. The two-part control rule includes a set of season and minimum size limited management measures coupled with a limit on the allowable age-3 impact rate south of Point Arena, California, that varies as a function of the most recent three year geometric mean of spawner escapement. The Council expressed concern, on the one hand, that the control rule might be unnecessarily restrictive by not allowing some level of *de minimis* fishing when escapements are low, but also that the control rule might not respond quickly enough to forward looking indicators of cohort strength because of its dependence on past spawner escapements.

At the March 8 meeting the workgroup shared information that focused on four topics:

1. Background related to the development of the current control rule,
2. Factors affecting juvenile production of SWRC, with particular focus on the 2014 and 2015 brood years that will be affected by ocean fisheries in 2016 and 2017,
3. Information that may help better predict age-3 ocean abundance in the upcoming fishing year, and
4. Methods for evaluating the relative risks and benefits of alternative control rules.

Substantial research and development will be required to complete the work under item 3. The tool used to evaluate alternative control rules (item 4) will be similar to the management strategy evaluation (MSE) used for control rule evaluation in 2012, but will also require further development. Staff from the SWFSC has the lead on this work. Work on these tools will have to be largely completed before they can be used to develop and evaluate alternative control rules.

The second phase of this project requires engagement with the Council family to provide input and advice regarding possible alternatives. The SRWCW expects that it will want to engage the Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) and other advisors, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and the Council. The SRWCW is operating under the assumption that the Council will need to make

a final recommendation to NMFS regarding a new control rule at the November 2016 meeting if it is to be used in the 2017 preseason salmon process.

The SRWCW is planning to meet next on June 15-16, 2016 at the SWFSC Santa Cruz, California. This will be a key meeting to assess progress related to items 3 and 4 in particular. The SRWCW will report on their progress at the June 2016 Council and should be able to indicate whether it is possible to meet the goal of developing a final recommendation by November 2016.

The workgroup did not set specific dates for additional meetings, but did outline the following next steps assuming that adequate progress has been made at the June SRWCW meeting.

1. Summer 2016 Workgroup Meeting
 - Consider input from June Council meeting
 - Engage the SAS regarding alternatives
2. September 2016 Council Meeting
 - Review progress and analysis of alternatives with Council
 - Seek review and advice from SSC
3. Fall 2016 Joint Workgroup Meeting with SAS
 - Evaluate alternatives
4. November 2016 Council Meeting
 - Potentially adopt final recommendation to NMFS for use in 2017.

The SRWCW would appreciate any additional guidance the Council may have regarding the assignment and associated timeline.

PFMC
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