

SALMON MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES HEARING SUMMARY

Date:	March 28, 2016	Hearing Officer:	Mr. Kyle Adicks
Location:	Chateau Westport Westport, WA	Other Council Members:	Phil Anderson
Attendance:	65	NMFS:	Mr. Jeromy Jording
Testifying:	15	Coast Guard:	LCDR Gregg Casad
		Salmon Team Member:	Mr. Doug Milward
		Council Staff:	Dr. Kit Dahl
Organizations Represented: Washington Trollers Association, Coastal Trollers Association, Westport Charter Boat Association, Ilwaco Charter Association, Willapa Bay Gillnetters Association, Puget Sound Anglers / Ocean Anglers			

Special Opening Remarks

Mr. Kyle Adicks provided an overview and Mr. Doug Milward reviewed the Alternatives for the commercial and sport salmon seasons.

Synopsis of Testimony

Of the 15 people testifying:

- 10 commented primarily on the commercial fishery.
- 4 commented primarily on the recreational fishery.

Commercial Troll Comments

- There was broad support for Alternative 1 and opposition to Alternative 3.
- Several commenters emphasized the need for a continuous season so as not to lose markets. A continuous June through September season would be ideal.
- Chinook is more important than coho, because it is a more valuable fish in terms of price per pound.
- Alternative 1 reduces Queets impacts through the June 16-30 closure and the 50-50 split of Chinook quota between spring and summer.
- Prefer a higher Chinook quota for the second half of June to the 50-50 spring-summer split.
- The Alternative 2 season structure with Alternative 1 quotas is preferred.
- Not in favor of a closure in late June and would rather trade opportunity in September to keep this period open.

- Several commenters opposed a 6” plug-only regulation, because it will cause a significant reduction in the Chinook harvest rate.
- A four-spread limit would reduce coho impacts.
- Area 3-4 has a restrictive subarea quota.
- A 20-fish trip limit is not profitable, and last year LaPush trollers had to decide whether the expense of travelling to Areas 2 or 4 was worth it when this trip limit was in place.
- Weekly limits will result in a safer fishery compared to per week/per trip limits, which cause a race for fish.
- Weekly limits are appropriate for Areas 3-4 but not Area 2.
- One commenter put forward a combined recreational-commercial season proposal focused on data gathering (see written testimony from Bob Lake).
- Ocean recreational fisheries are managed at the expense of inside fisheries, specifically the Willapa Bay gillnet fishery. This fishery has had very limited fishing opportunity in recent years.
- Willapa Bay should be recognized as a hatchery-driven system, and inside fisheries managed accordingly.
- Forecast abundance is not accurate, especially when made early in the year. If regulations are not adjusted in a timely way, ocean fishing opportunity is lost and escapement is higher than anticipated. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife needs to monitor inseason more intensively.
- Hatchery production should be increased.

Recreational Comments

- There was broad support for Alternative 1 and opposition to Alternative 3.
- Chinook is more important than coho, because it is more valued by recreational anglers.
- Do not recommend an undifferentiated 2-fish bag limit without a 1-fish sub-bag limit for Chinook.
- There is enough to work with in Alternatives 1 and 2 to develop a viable season.
- Any season structure between Alternatives 2 and 3 (i.e., full or near full closure) should invoke the fishery failure provisions in the Magnuson-Stevens Act.
- A closure or near full closure would have disastrous socioeconomic consequences for the fishing industry and coastal communities. Many businesses and related infrastructure would not likely survive into 2017.
- Primary objective is to fish seven days a week from mid-June through Labor Day.
- There may not be enough coho to allow catching the Chinook quota under Alternative 1
- Prohibit coho retention north of Leadbetttter Point.
- A five days a week season structure should be avoided if at all possible.
- Support a two-week Chinook mark selective fishery in June with a two-fish bag limit.
- An early season mark selective Chinook only fishery is preferred to reduce coho impacts.
- Coho mortalities should be used so as to maximize Chinook catch.

Written Statements (Attached)

- Rob Beardon, Mayor of Westport, Washington (presented by Mark Cedergreen on behalf of the Mayor)

- Thomas Kelly, Kelly's Fresh Fish
- Bob Lake, recreational and commercial fisherman
- Roger Lloyd, Mill Creek, Washington
- Steve Westrick, Westport Charterboat Association President

PFMC
04/05/16



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March 28, 2016

Dear Pacific Fishery Management Council,

My name is Rob Bearden, and I am the Mayor of the City of Westport. I had hoped to attend tonight's meeting, but there is a Westport City Council meeting tonight that occurs at the same time as the public hearing. I plan to come over to the hearing after the council meeting is completed.

I strongly urge the Pacific Fishery Management Council to allow recreational and commercial salmon seasons for our area. I recognize the Coho salmon issues and respect the Council's long term conservation goals, but the option of zero non-Tribal ocean fishing would be devastating to our city, our businesses, and our families. Our area has already been hit hard by not having a clam digging season due to domoic acid levels. To further that hit by not allowing salmon fisheries would be disastrous.

The recreational salmon fishery is vital to our tourism industry as it brings thousands of people into our city who sleep in our accommodations, eat at our restaurants, and shop at our businesses. The commercial fishery is vital to our seafood processing industry and to the country so that we may supply many with healthy, wild salmon.

Both recreational and commercial fisheries are of paramount importance to our families, as both provide numerous job opportunities for hard working men and women to support their families and spend money in our community. Businesses and families alike would be devastated by not establishing salmon fisheries for the 2016 season. It is imperative to our entire community that ocean salmon fishing be allowed.

Sincerely,

Rob Bearden
Mayor of Westport

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Kelly's Fresh Fish

March 22, 2016



To Whom it may concern,

My name is Tom Kelly; I am a Washington State Ocean Commercial Salmon Troller, I have owned my license for 25 years and I primarily fish area 3 out of LaPush, WA. I am also a self-marketer where I sell my fresh catch to clients in the Seattle area on a weekly basis during our season.

Today I would like to give testimony on the value of having weekly trip limits in area 3-4 during the spring fishery as opposed to having our spring season structured in area 3-4 that allows a fisherman 50 or 60 Chinook "per trip". This testimony is given assuming we will have an opportunity to troll commercially this year.

As I am sure most are aware of, area 3-4 has a very restrictive sub-area quota that can seriously shorten our opportunities and close this area prematurely when comparing it to area 2 or area 1. Last year our spring season in area 3 lasted just 15 ½ days as the sub area quota for area 3-4 neared its limit. After approximately one week of this closure, area 4 re-opened for 20 fish trip limits where those of us that fish out of LaPush had to decide if we wanted to travel 30 miles to the North to fish area 4 or travel 28 miles to the South to fish area 2. Most of us decided to travel North as this is closer to the area we are accustomed to fishing in area 3. Personally, I don't like to fish on 20 fish trip limits as it is very difficult to justify the expense and travel against the earning potential that paltry 20 fish trip limits bring. However, I do so only to keep my customers happy and in place, otherwise I risk losing them altogether as they are much happier receiving at least some fresh fish rather than nothing altogether. The clients I serve with my small business and the customers they sell to, prefer a consistent weekly supply of fresh fish May-September.

Last year our spring season in area 3-4 was structured to allow a fisherman 60 fish "per trip", where if a fisherman chose to do so, he could run in and out as many times as possible in a given week as long as he did not exceed the 60 fish "per trip" limit. I personally witnessed several boats attempt this shotgun style fishery where guys ran their boats and themselves to the limit, pushing through hazardous weather conditions and physically pushing themselves to the point of complete exhaustion! Knowing that if they did not get out there, the next guy would and the season might close. Is this really the type of unsafe fishery the State wants to encourage? Having a predictable spring fishery in area 3-4 with weekly trip limits is a much safer option. There were also several boats that normally fish area 2, boats from area 1 and even Oregon residents that hold a Washington State Troll License that made the trek to area 3 and 4 that contributed to our short season.

There are roughly 25-30 boats that fish area 3-4 on a regular basis for the entire season, May-September, not counting the boats that transit there from area 1,2 or out of State residents. Most are out of the LaPush marina, where about half of us (10-15) are self-marketers. We fish out of LaPush

primarily because it is safe for us smaller boats to do so! My boat is a Modutech 32' Bristol Bay that I feel safe and calm to transit the Quileute River Bar on any given day or night without having to be too concerned with what the tide is doing. That cannot be said for the area 2 Port of Westport and the Grays Harbor Bar or area 1 and the mighty Columbia River Bar. Those areas have Bars that are much more unpredictable and at times on the Ebb Tide can be completely unpassable for a smaller boat. We choose to fish out of LaPush because it is much safer for us to do so and when area 3 closes prematurely most of us are not mobile enough to move our operations south.

Another consideration when area 3-4 is closed is fisherman don't patronize any business' in the Port Angeles, Forks or LaPush areas. Employment that depends on fisherman bringing their catch back to Port to sell to wholesalers suffers or completely shuts down when area 3 closes prematurely. Allow me to be completely clear, I am not promoting weekly trip limits during the spring season in area 2, just area 3-4. Bottom line is we owe it to the residents of these communities, the fisherman who consistently fish area 3-4 and the tax paying citizens of this State who helped pay for the propagation of the fish we harvest to do a better, more consistent job of structuring a meaningful season in area 3-4.

Respectfully Submitted

Thomas Kelly
Kelly's Fresh Fish

PFMC MEETING

March 28, 2016

PROPOSALS FOR 2016 OCEAN FISHERIES;

This is to protect natural spawning coastal and Puget Sound coho.

OCEAN TROLL; May 1, 2016 – June 30, 2016 or until quota is reached

Retain all species, chinook and coho, marked and unmarked. This will start a data base. ALSO, ABSOLUTELY NO HIGH GRADING!

OCEAN RECREATIONAL; May1, 2016 - June 30, 2016 .1 Fish per day, Chinook or Coho retain first fish caught marked or unmarked.

THIS WILL ENABLE THE DFW TO BUILD A DATA BASE and also see what stocks are being harvested.

ABSOLUTELY NO FISHING FROM LEADBETTER NORTH AFTER JUNE 30,2016 IN THE OCEAN.

WILLAPA BAY; THERE SHOULD NOT BE ANY FISHING IN Willapa Bay in area 2T and north of Island Sands Light prior to September 1, 2016. This will protect the Coastal and Puget Sound Natural Coho that "DIP -IN" to Willapa Bay during the summer season. This should help the new "Willapa Wild Fish" to prosper. All of Willapa Bay can then open to the recreational fishers on September 1, 2016.

Thank you, Bob Lake, recreational and commercial fisherman.

Hello, I am Roger Lloyd and I live in Mill Creek Washington, but I was born & raised in Aberdeen. I have been coming to Westport fishing off & on for 50 years, but especially the last 15 years. I have observed the results of the implementation of the fishing regulations each year, but this is the 1st time I have expressed my opinion as to how we can make the outcome better. It starts with the estimate of the number of salmon that are expected to return each year. It would be very helpful if this estimate was actually accurate for a change, but that is not going to happen. The estimate is an educated guess at best with some large misses in both directions occurring. From that estimate the quota is set for each area and then the length of the season & catch per day regulations are set for the ocean season. We have all seen over the last decade the large variability in ocean conditions from year to year, and how it impacts the number of fish that are caught. There however is no way to know in March or April, when the fishing regulation are being decided, what those conditions are going to be, but the best guess is made and the regulations are set for the season. The primary goal of the Fish & Wildlife regulations appears to me to be sure that the quota is not caught before mid September thus shutting down the Westport charter fleet. To achieve this goal, the initial fishing regulations are usually too restrictive to insure that if fishing happens to be very good that season, the quota will not be caught early and end the season. There seems to be a great reluctance on the part of Fish & Wildlife to modify these regulations once they are set. It appears that only after it becomes obvious that there is no way that the quota can be caught early, that they modify the regulation. Last year was a good example of this issue. The salmon were a long way out and down a couple of hundred feet making mooching from a charter boat difficult and not very effective. The number of salmon being caught early in the season was small, but Fish & Wildlife didn't make timely adjustments in the regulations and part of the ocean quota ended up going to the rivers. This is not unfortunately a rare occurrence.

The solution to this problem requires a lot more flexibility in managing the regulations as the season progresses by the Fish & Wildlife department. The regulations set in March and April may not be compatible with the twin goals of maximizing the percent of the quota caught but not achieving that too early and prematurely ending the season.

Since there are only a few places to launch boats to go fishing in the ocean, it requires only a small number of fish & wildlife agents to provide a very accurate timely count of how many and what type of salmon are being caught and adjust the regulations on a weekly basis if necessary, to reflect the current catch. I think that the Fish & Wildlife department should be judged on how effective they are in achieving both goals, and not by how irritated fisherman and the charter offices are at the changing regulations. The Fish & Wildlife department could set up a recorded hotline for the private boat operators to check with before they went fishing & they could inform the charter offices by phone.

Last but not least, please crank up the output at our fish hatchery's so that we have a larger return of salmon & ignore the junk science regarding hatchery salmon.

Thank You

Roger

PUBLIC TESTIMONY BULLETS
MONDAY, MARCH 28

Thank you Mr. Chairman and hearing staff, we appreciate you coming to Westport to conduct this public hearing. *Makes it convenient for folks.*

I'm Steve Westrick, president of the Westport Charterboat Association and I will be representing our group tonight.

Our members have met and discussed this year's salmon options.

We fully recognize the seriousness of the Coho situation, I must admit it took me some time to get through the denial phase myself of the possibility of non-retention for Coho, even though the signs were there.

We know it's still early in the process so here are some general thoughts from us:

- **OUR primary OBJECTIVE** is to be able to fish from mid-June through Labor Day, 7 days per week.
- With regard to quotas, we like **Alternative 1** of course, especially the Chinook number, however, we are concerned that there may not be enough Coho to last long enough to catch the available Chinook, which unfortunately could leave days on the table.
- **Alternative 3** would just flat be a disaster, not just for us, but the entire South Beach community. This really goes without saying.
- For Coho: We can support a regulation **prohibiting Coho retention** north of Point Leadbetter.
- On Chinook: We can support a **one Chinook bag limit** as it's highly likely we will have to rely solely on them with the absence of Coho.
- On the two week Selective Chinook: We can support a **two-week Selective Fishery for Chinook (with a two fish bag) in June**, if the Coho mortality is low enough
- And next: We could support a **5-day-week (Sunday through Thursday)** if absolutely necessary to add calendar days to the fishery
- And lastly: We **DON'T support a TOTAL CLOSURE** such as the one in 1994

Don't say unless prompted →

This is really a tuff situation~we don't cherish the thought of a one salmon bag limit but we also do not cherish the idea of being tied to the dock for half the season!!

We will be working with fishery managers and other harvester groups through the North of Falcon process and at the April PFMC meeting to help design seasons that are fair, that minimize impacts on Coho, and at the same time provide time on the water for Chinook.

Thank you,

