

SACRAMENTO RIVER WINTER CHINOOK CONTROL RULE UPDATE

The Council is concerned with the current status of Sacramento River winter Chinook (SRWC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service has identified SRWC as one of eight “[Species in the Spotlight](#),” which are among the most at risk of extinction in the near future. In 2015 and 2016, the Council applied considerable fishery restrictions and levels of precaution beyond what is called for in the current SRWC harvest policy due to extended drought conditions and evidence of poor juvenile recruitment. At the November 2015 Council meeting, the Council formed the Ad Hoc Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup (SRWCW) which met for the first time at the March 2016 Council meeting to formally begin the task of exploring an alternative SRWC harvest policy for the future. The Council and National Marine Fisheries Service are striving to complete this effort for use in the management of 2017 fisheries and has approved an aggressive tentative schedule to accomplish this goal (Agenda Item H.1, Attachment 1).

SRWC are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act and have been harvested incidentally in ocean fisheries, primarily off the central California coast. A two-part consultation standard for endangered SRWC was implemented in 2012. The first component of the consultation standard is the season and size limit provisions for central California salmon fisheries. The second component of the consultation standard is specified by a control rule that limits the maximum age-3 impact rate for the area south of Point Arena, California based on the geometric mean of the most recent three years of spawner escapement.

The Council has expressed concern that the control rule is unnecessarily restrictive and could allow for *de minimis* levels of fishing rather than complete closures when abundance is low without significantly increasing the risk of extinction. There are also concerns that the control rule’s reliance on spawner escapement to determine allowable impacts is not adequately reactive to environmental and biological stressors such as the ongoing drought, *El Niño* events, and reduced juvenile survival.

The SRWCW is scheduled to hold a webinar June 15, 2016 to review and respond to Council guidance from March, develop indicators of cohort strength and a predictor of age-3 ocean abundance, review methods for evaluating the relative risks and benefits of alternative control rules, discuss potential alternative harvest control rules, review the proposed process and schedule, and outline objectives and analyses for future work. The SRWCW is anticipated to provide a progress report at the June Council meeting.

Council Task:

- 1. Review progress and consider the report of the SRWCW.**
- 2. Provide guidance on control rule alternatives, future analyses, and the proposed schedule.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.1, Attachment 1: Draft Sacramento River Winter Chinook Harvest Policy Review schedule.

Agenda Order:

- H.1 Sacramento River Winter Chinook Harvest Control Rule Update Mike Burner
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Review Progress and Provide Guidance on Developing a Range of Control Rule Alternatives and Future Analyses.

PFMC
05/19/16