

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 June 2015 Council meeting, the Council heard an update from the Ad Hoc Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup (SRWCW) and provided guidance on the formulation of alternative SRWC control rules for future consideration.

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 met August 16-17, 2016 at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in Santa Cruz, California to review and respond to Council guidance from June, continue work on abundance forecasting, develop initial control alternatives, discuss methods for future control rule evaluation, review the proposed process and schedule, and outline objectives and analyses for future work. Their report is included in the reference materials as Agenda Item H.1.a, SRWCW Report.

The Council may consider adding topics discussed under this agenda item to the list of final topics for the 2016 Salmon Methodology Review under Agenda Item H.2.

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 including possible inclusion of items for the 2016 Salmon Methodology Review.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.1.a, SRWCW Report.

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 and Preliminary Recommendations on Harvest Control Rule Alternatives and Future Analyses

PFMC
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