

SACRAMENTO RIVER WINTER CHINOOK HARVEST CONTROL RULE REVIEW

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is concerned with the current status of Sacramento River winter Chinook (SRWC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has identified SRWC as one of eight “[Species in the Spotlight](#),” which are among the most at risk of extinction in the near future. Since 2015, the Council has 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 September 2016 Council meeting, the Council heard an update from the Ad Hoc Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup (SRWCW), reviewed the proposed forecasting methodology, and approved a draft range of alternative control rules for analysis.

SRWC are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) 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 rapid changes in abundance.

The SRWCW worked over the winter to review and respond to Council guidance from September, consider forecasting recommendations from the 2016 methodology review process, and develop methods for control rule evaluation. The SRWCW has prepared two reports for this meeting. The first report summarizes preliminary results of a management strategy evaluation (MSE) of the alternative control rules (Agenda Item E.1.a, SRWCW Report 1) and the second documents the methods used in the SRWC MSE (Agenda Item E.1.a, SRWCW Report 2).

It is not anticipated that the Council will be making policy recommendations based on these initial analyses. Rather, the Council and its advisory bodies are scheduled to review progress, provide feedback on the MSE methods proposed by the SRWCW, and discuss future analyses and schedules. The Council is tentatively scheduled to provide preliminary recommendations at its September 2017 meeting in Boise, Idaho and final Council recommendations at its November meeting in Costa Mesa, California (Agenda Item C.4, Attachment 1). Between the April and September Council meetings it is anticipated that the SRWCW will hold one or more meetings to refine the evaluation of the alternative control rules and potentially meet in joint session with the Salmon Advisory Subpanel for stakeholder input. Following the November Council meeting, it is anticipated that NMFS will consider Council recommendations in its review of the consultation standards under the ESA for potential implementation for 2018 ocean salmon fisheries.

The Council may consider adding topics discussed under this agenda item to the list of preliminary topics for the 2017 Salmon Methodology Review under Agenda Item E.2.

Council Task:

- 1. Review progress and consider the report of the SRWCW.**
- 2. Provide guidance on the MSE of the alternative control rules, future analyses, and the proposed schedule including possible inclusion of items for the 2017 Salmon Methodology Review.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.1.a, SRWCW Report 1: Preliminary evaluation of alternative Sacramento River winter Chinook salmon control rules.
2. Agenda Item E.1.a, SRWCW Report 2: Sacramento River winter Chinook management strategy evaluation: methods supplement.

Agenda Order:

- E.1 Sacramento River Winter Chinook Harvest Control Rule Review Robin Ehlke
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. Council Discussion and Guidance

PFMC
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