

Revision to definition of Newport – Coos Bay Ocean Salmon Catch Area Line

Ocean Salmon Management Program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

During the Pacific Fishery Management Council's 2017 salmon season regulation setting process, the Florence South Jetty at 44°00'54" N. lat. was adopted as a boundary for the commercial troll salmon seasons. The Florence South Jetty has been used in prior years as a boundary (1991-93, and 2001-2006). At some point in time, the Florence South Jetty line was also adopted as the definition for use in the Klamath Ocean Harvest Model (KOHM) and the Fishery Regulation Assessment Models (FRAM) as the split between the Northern Oregon (NO) cell and the Central Oregon (CO) cell. However, this use of the Florence South Jetty line in the models was incorrectly predicated upon the belief that this was the management area split encompassed in both the coded wire tag (CWT) data base and the fishery landings reports from Oregon.

The actual split between the Newport (4) and Coos Bay (5) management areas has been a line that starts at Heceta Head and then takes a jog to the South around Heceta Bank before returning back up to the latitude of Heceta Head. This jog around Heceta Bank encompasses an additional 3 nautical miles to the south of the Florence South Jetty line (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Landings and CWT data are assigned to the area of catch where the majority of the salmon are reported as caught during any given trip. The areas both shoreward and seaward of the jog around Heceta Bank, which falls within catch area 5, typically have had only minimal effort and catch. Most catch from this shoreside area would have been reported as coming from catch area 4, as the majority of the catch from most commercial troll fishing trips would typically have come from Heceta Bank.

The original establishment of the line that followed Heceta Bank was in the era prior to GPS technology. At the time, most troll vessels only used compass and sonar in combination with charts and visible shore based landmarks for navigation. As such, and knowing that the trollers typically followed specific depth contours on their tacks, the Newport management area line was drawn in such a way as to include Heceta Bank. This was the logical approach as Heceta Bank starts well above Heceta Head, and trips would typically fish throughout Heceta Bank. More recent information with location specific commercial troll trip activity available from Project CROOS verified that almost all troll activity between Heceta Head and the southern bound of Heceta Bank was occurring on or near Heceta Bank. Very little activity was occurring shoreward of Heceta Bank.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife believes that the continued use of this special jog around Heceta Bank is archaic and should be corrected to better match actual fishery behavior and landings. Beginning in 2018, the State of Oregon will be implementing a change in the definition of the split between the Newport and Coos Bay Ocean Salmon Catch Areas to better match the actual data in both landing reports and the CWT data base. This change will utilize the current lower bound of the Heceta Bank jog as defined in the current area definitions as the boundary between the two areas as a straight E-W line at 43°58'00"N Lat. Note: This same line at the south end of Heceta Bank was used as a regulatory boundary in the 1998 federally adopted ocean salmon regulations.

The actual data encompassed in salmon management data sets including the Klamath Ocean Harvest Model (KOHM), the Chinook FRAM, the coho FRAM, and the PSMFC's Regional Mark Information System (RMIS); as well as other sources is more accurately reflected by the south end of Heceta Bank. The Council and Salmon Technical Team are advised that the area descriptions in the KOHM, the FRAMs, and other sources where any reference points to either the NO, the CO, the Newport Ocean Salmon Catch Area, and the Coos Bay Ocean Salmon Catch Area should be revised with this new line beginning in 2018.

An STT webinar discussion on June 28, 2017 raised questions regarding CWT inputs and recorded area of catch. Specific concern was with regards to prior CWT data from the recreational fishery at Florence. Based on the discussion, modelers should transform any prior CWT records from the ocean recreational fishery at Florence (code 30) that have been recorded as coming from the Coos Bay Catch Area (code 05) to the Newport Catch Area (code 04). No changes to the model inputs or data were identified as needed for the troll salmon fishery.

At this time ODFW will not be making any changes to the RMIS data base, but is open to further discussions on this topic with the STT. Primarily, ODFW would like to preserve the historical record of the prior CWT recoveries in RMIS. Comments from STT modelers indicated that it would be a relatively easy exercise to make the noted changes to the CWTs in the models for the recreational CWT recoveries and estimates from Florence, and we agree this would be the most appropriate action to take.

It is important to note that Florence is one of the least active ocean recreational salmon fishing ports on the Oregon Coast. Within the most recent 14 years where catch estimates were generated for Florence, Florence only accounted for 1.9% of the coho and 1.1% of the Chinook landed in the recreational fishery south of Cape Falcon, and 1.3% of the coho and 0.9% of the Chinook landed statewide from the ocean recreational fishery. Based on this, it is anticipated that the changes to the model inputs will result in very little change to modeled fishery impacts.

In addition, it is recommended that any future use of a regulatory line for ocean salmon fisheries in this area should utilize the Heceta Bank line at 43°58'00" N Lat. line (Figure 3) instead of the Florence South Jetty line. Feedback to ODFW from fishery participants indicated that there was confusion in prior years with the Florence South Jetty line with some participants apparently mistakenly believing that the fishery was open to the Heceta Bank line.

This was discussed with Oregon State Police marine enforcement. We were in concurrence that this change would likely make enforcement of this area easier, more effective, and more appropriate in those years when a regulatory split is required between the NO and CO. ODFW recommends that in any future years that the management area boundary at the Heceta Bank line be used in lieu of the Florence South Jetty.

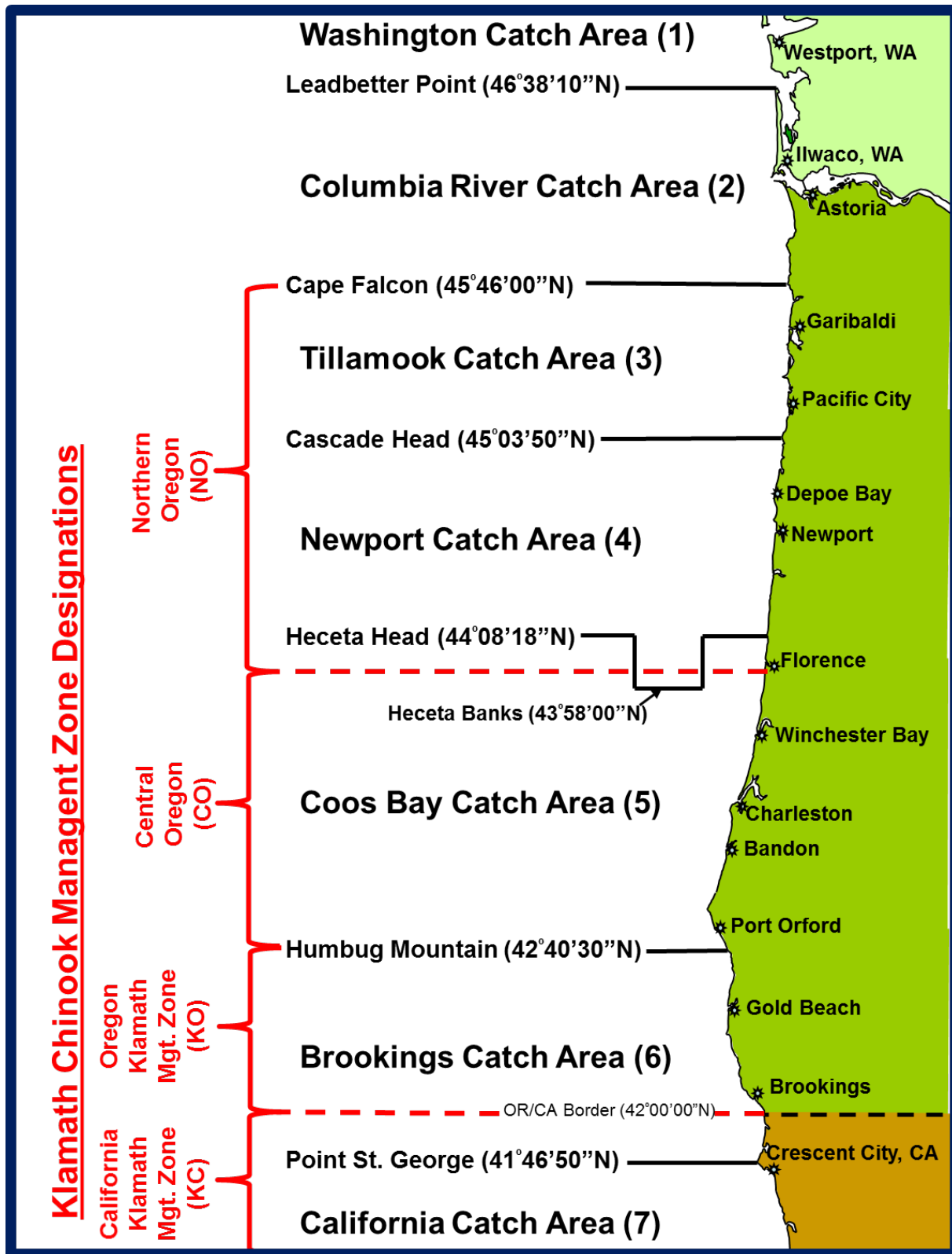


Figure 1. Current Oregon Ocean Salmon Catch Areas and corresponding Klamath Ocean Harvest Model boundaries off Oregon.

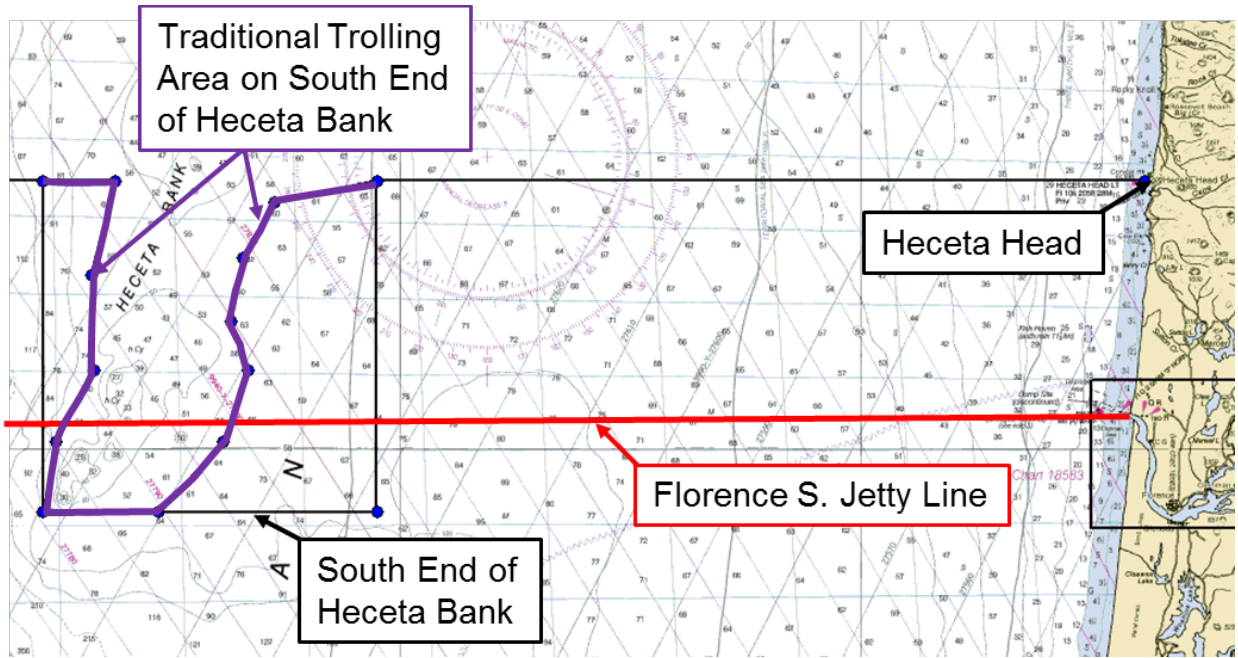


Figure 2. Chart with the current ODFW management line between the Newport and Coos Bay Ocean Salmon Management Catch Areas (black with jog around Heceta Bank), the approximate outside depth contour of traditional trolling areas on Heceta Bank (purple line), and the Florence South Jetty management line that has been used in various years in PFMC regulations (red). New definition of the ODFW management line between the Newport and Coos Bay Ocean Salmon Management Catch Areas will establish the boundary as an E-W line of latitude that corresponds to the southern bound of the existing management area line jog around Heceta Bank.

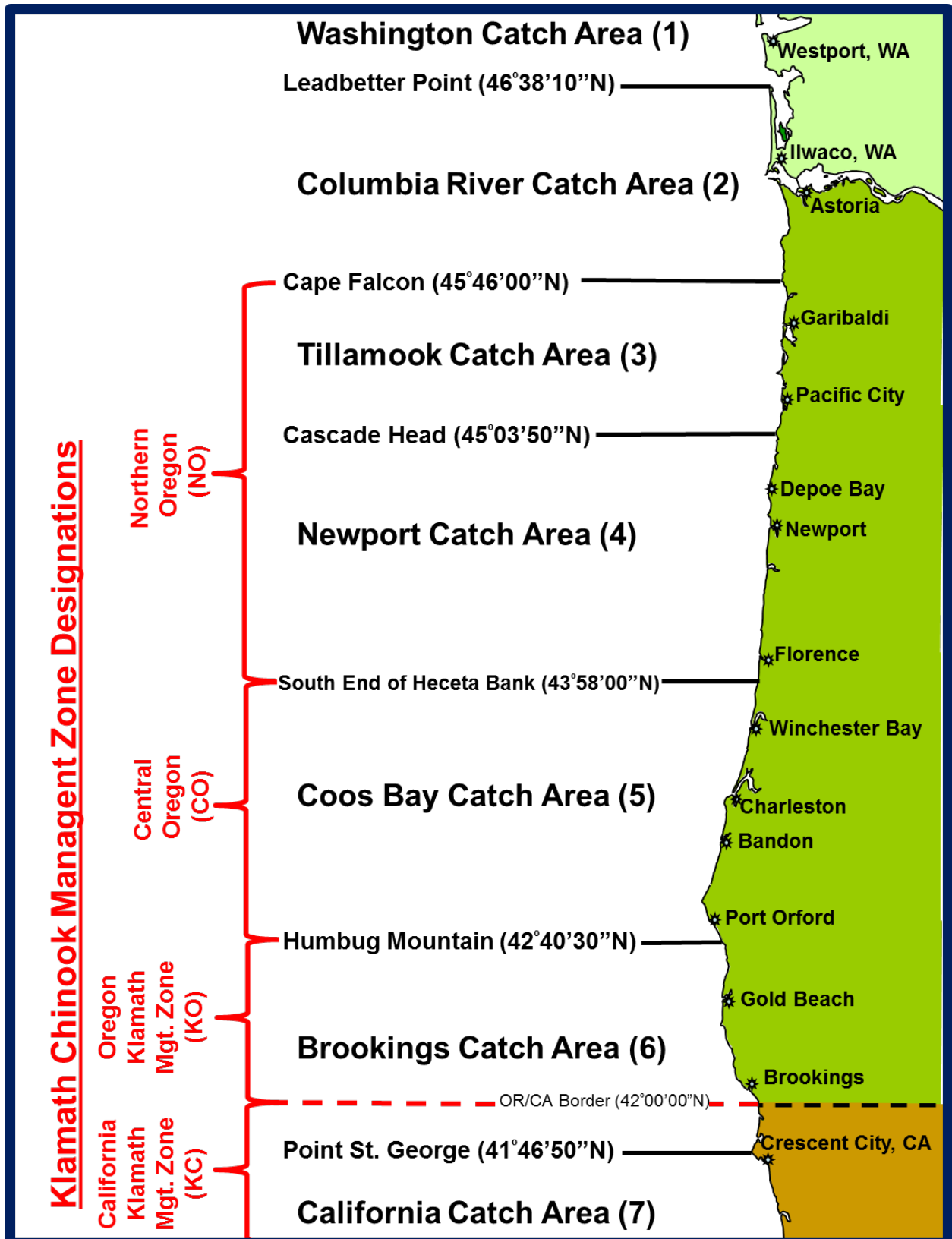


Figure 3. New Ocean Salmon Management Catch Area definitions for Oregon and definitions of Klamath Ocean Harvest Model boundaries to be implemented beginning in 2018.