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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
West Coast Region  
1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100  
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-1274

October 11, 2017

Mr. Phil Anderson, Chair  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Dear Chair Anderson:

This letter is to inform the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) that NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has made determinations on status changes for seven stocks of Pacific salmon, managed under the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP):

Stillaguamish coho	Klamath River fall Chinook
Queets coho	Skagit coho
Hood Canal coho	Quillayute fall coho
Snohomish coho	

NMFS' determinations are based on the most recent salmon stock assessments conducted by the Council's Salmon Technical Team (STT)<sup>1</sup> and as reported in the Council's Preseason Report I (Pre-I) for 2017 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations (Table V-4) and Review of 2016 Ocean Salmon Fisheries (Tables II-6 and III-7). These determinations are consistent with the Council's letter to NMFS regarding 2017 Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Plan Stock Status Updates, dated July 6, 2017. Information about the newly revised status of the seven salmon stocks, as well as pertinent information about each from the FMP is identified below (also, see FMP Table 1-1). Note that all but one stock discussed in this letter are subject to Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) provisions; therefore, no annual catch limits (ACLs) are specified for those stocks.<sup>2</sup> The Klamath River fall Chinook stock is not subject to PST provisions.

### Stock No Longer Subject To Overfishing

In 2016, one stock of salmon was determined to be *subject to overfishing*, based on assessment data in Pre-I for 2016. Based on updated assessment data in Pre-I for 2017, this stock has been determined *not subject to overfishing*.

- Hood Canal coho

<sup>1</sup> The STT comprises staff from NMFS' Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and treaty tribes (currently vacant).

<sup>2</sup> Stocks managed under an international agreement to which the U.S. is a party are excepted from the Magnuson-Stevens Act 303(a)(15) requirement for specifying ACLs; see CFR 600.310(h)(2).



### Stocks No Longer Approaching an Overfished Condition

In 2016, two stocks of salmon were determined to be *approaching an overfished condition*, based on assessment data in Pre-I for 2016. Based on updated assessment data in Pre-I for 2017, these stocks have been determined *not approaching an overfished condition*.

- Quillayute fall coho
- Snohomish coho

### Stock Subject to Overfishing

Based on assessment data in Pre-I for 2017, the following salmon stock has been determined to be *subject to overfishing*.

- Stillaguamish coho – This stock is identified as a target stock in the FMP. It contributes to U.S. ocean fisheries north of Cape Falcon and inside fisheries in Washington, as well as ocean fisheries off of British Columbia, Canada. This stock has been determined to be *subject to overfishing* based on data from 2015, which is the most recent year for which an annual exploitation rate is reported for this stock. The exploitation rate for this stock in 2015 was 0.52, which exceeds its maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT) of 0.50.

### Stocks Approaching an Overfished Condition

Based on assessment data in Pre-I for 2017, Table V-4, three salmon stocks have been determined to be *approaching an overfished condition*.

- Klamath River fall Chinook – This stock is identified as a target stock in the FMP. It contributes to U.S. ocean fisheries from Cape Falcon, Oregon, to Point Sur, California, as well as tribal and recreational fisheries in the Klamath River. Based on the most recent assessment, the three-year geometric mean of escapement for 2015, 2016, and 2017<sub>forecast</sub> is 15,436, which is below the stock's minimum stock size threshold (MSST) of 30,525.
- Queets coho – This stock is identified as a target stock in the FMP. It contributes to U.S. ocean fisheries north of Cape Falcon and inside fisheries in the Queets River, as well as ocean fisheries off British Columbia, Canada. Based on the most recent assessment, the three-year geometric mean of escapement for 2014, 2015, and 2017<sub>forecast</sub> is 4,308, which is below the stock's minimum stock size threshold (MSST) of 4,350. Escapement for 2016 is not available.
- Skagit coho – This stock is identified as a target stock in the FMP. It contributes to U.S. ocean fisheries north of Cape Falcon and inside fisheries in Puget Sound, as well as ocean fisheries off of British Columbia, Canada. Based on the most recent assessment, the three-year geometric mean of escapement for 2014, 2015, and 2017<sub>forecast</sub> is 12,288, which is below the stock's MSST of 14,875. Escapement for 2016 is not available.

### Overfishing

Overfishing occurs when a salmon stock's total annual exploitation rate exceeds the stock's MFMT set in the FMP (FMP Table 3-1). When overfishing occurs, section 3.1.2.1 of the FMP states that the Council shall:

1. notify the NMFS Regional Administrator of the STT's findings;
2. direct the STT to assess the mortality rates in fisheries impacting the stock of concern and report their findings;

3. immediately take action to ensure Council area fisheries are not contributing to overfishing, and;
4. notify pertinent management agencies of the stock's status and the contribution of various fisheries to the total exploitation rate.

The total annual exploitation rate for Pacific salmon includes impacts from Council-area fisheries as well as other fisheries (e.g., fisheries managed in Alaska and Canada under the PST and inside fisheries managed by the states). NMFS notes that the one stock that is subject to overfishing, Stillaguamish coho, is subject to harvest in fisheries north of the U.S./Canada border and/or in Washington state waters, and that the total exploitation rate on this stock in 2015 was 0.52 compared with its MFMT of 0.50. Preseason total exploitation rate forecasts for this stock were  $\leq 0.10$  in 2016 and 0.085 in 2017 (Preseason Report III for 2016 and 2017, respectively). This suggests that the actual total exploitation rate for Stillaguamish coho in 2016 and 2017 should be well below MFMT when reported in the Council's future Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Documents.

### **Overfished**

Under the FMP, a stock will be considered *overfished* if the three-year geometric mean of annual spawning escapements falls below the stock's MSST. NMFS has not made any new overfished determinations for salmon stocks under the FMP, based on the assessment data in the Review of 2016 Ocean Salmon Fisheries.

### **Approaching Overfished**

Under the FMP, a stock will be considered *approaching overfished* if the three-year geometric mean of the stock's two most recent postseason estimates of spawning escapement and the current preseason forecast of spawning escapement, is below its MSST. When a stock is approaching an overfished condition, the FMP (Section 3.13.1) states the Council shall:

1. notify the NMFS Regional Administrator of this situation;
2. notify pertinent management entities, and;
3. structure Council area fisheries to avoid the stock becoming overfished and to mitigate the effects on stock status.

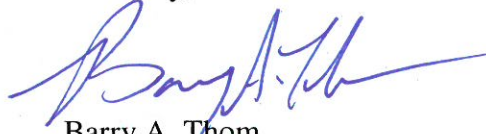
NMFS notes that the assessment on which the approaching overfished determination is made uses an escapement forecast that is based on application of the previous year's management measures on the current year stock abundance, and that the actual escapement determined post-season may be different; therefore, an approaching overfished determination does not necessarily mean that an overfished determination is anticipated.

### **Conclusion**

If the next stock assessment shows that overfishing and approaching overfished status of the stocks mentioned in this letter has since ended, then the NMFS West Coast Region will recommend to the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries that the status of these stocks should be changed to *not subject to overfishing* and *not approaching overfished*. However, if exceedance of MFMT for Stillaguamish coho continues, the Council may consider taking further action, consistent with the provisions of the FMP. If the Klamath River fall Chinook, Queets

coho, or Skagit coho stock continue to meet the criteria for approaching overfished, the Council should consider taking further action, as recommended in the FMP and described above. If any of these three stocks becomes overfished, it will be necessary for the Council to direct the STT to prepare a rebuilding plan within one year, as described in the FMP (Section 3.1.4.1).

Sincerely,



Barry A. Thom  
Regional Administrator

cc: Pacific Fishery Management Council – C. Tracy