

JAN 20 2020



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
THE DIRECTOR

Mr. Charles A. Tracy
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Dear Mr. Tracy:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the schedule for the 2020 salmon season regulatory review. For many years the Pacific Fishery Management Council has adopted annual management measures for West Coast ocean salmon fisheries at the April Council meeting with the expectation that the recommended measures would be approved and implemented by NOAA Fisheries by May 1. As the Council is aware, the short time between Council transmittal of required documentation to NOAA Fisheries and anticipated implementation by May 1 has become increasingly challenging, culminating in the delay in 2019. I appreciate that the Council is taking steps to amend the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to address this issue beginning in 2021, and I understand your immediate concern with respect to potential effects on the Council's proposed 2020 salmon season schedule.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to the sustainable management of fisheries to benefit the nation as a whole and with particular concern for our fishery-dependent communities. Fishing constraints in recent years have resulted in economic hardships for some West Coast fishing communities. Your letter indicates a delay to May 11, 2020, could further exacerbate that situation, i.e., losses equivalent to 30 commercial fishing days off the California coast and 10 days of lost recreational opportunity.

As mentioned in your letter, the Council anticipates taking action on salmon season recommendations in April, several days earlier in 2020 than in 2019. However, as previously discussed with the Council, the tentative schedule for 2020, as adopted by the Council in November 2019, presents similar challenges as those in recent years. This will inhibit our ability to complete our regulatory review and open fisheries on May 1, 2020. I understand from your letter that this is the last year you anticipate this situation to occur, since the Council's new FMP amendment would allow for a mid-May fishery start date beginning in 2021.

Considering the Council's commitment to resolve the issue by the 2021 season, the potential for economic harm, and a feasible timeline for regulatory review, I propose to target a May 6, 2020, fishery opening. This revised date assumes that the Council can commit to transmitting its recommendations to NOAA Fisheries no later than April 15, 2020, and that NOAA Fisheries can approve the measures as being consistent with all applicable law.



If you have questions, please contact Barry Thom, West Coast Regional Administrator, at 503-231-6266 or Barry.Thom@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Oliver". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "C" at the beginning.

Chris Oliver
Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries