

SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER WHALE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT CONSULTATION

In response to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reinitiating Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation on the effect of Council-area ocean salmon fisheries on Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW), the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) formed the ad hoc SRKW Workgroup (Workgroup) in April 2019. The Workgroup was tasked with reassessing the effects of Council-area ocean salmon fisheries on the Chinook salmon prey base of SRKW, and potentially recommend conservation measure(s) or management tool(s) that limit Council-area fishery impacts on Chinook salmon prey availability for SRKW. NMFS has developed a [webpage](#) dedicated to the Workgroup which includes meeting schedules, materials shared, and additional information on SRKWs.

NMFS has indicated that a Biological Opinion on the effects of Council-area ocean salmon fisheries on the Chinook salmon prey base of SRKW will need to be in place by the onset of the 2020 Council-area ocean salmon fisheries.

The Workgroup has focused on developing a risk assessment to help inform the Council of potential impacts to SRKW as a result of implementing the Salmon Fishery Management Plan (Agenda Item E.3.a, SRKW Workgroup Report 1). The Workgroup has worked diligently to gather data, identify criteria, develop methods, and draft the risk assessment within the proposed timeframe (between May and September of 2019). Due to the short time-frame and the high degree of analysis needed to formulate the risk assessment, the Workgroup was not able to fully complete the task but has provided draft documents and progress reports to the Council as work progressed. At the November 2019 Council meeting, the Workgroup provided an updated [draft risk assessment](#), and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) provided an [SSC report](#) in support of the analytical methods and materials used to date by the Workgroup.

Since November, the Workgroup has met three times to refine the risk assessment and has since completed the technical work and analysis. The Workgroup considers the risk assessment a final draft, with the exception of including an executive summary and minor editing. A final risk assessment is expected at the June 2020 Council meeting.

The Workgroup was also directed by the Council to draft recommendations if needed, which the Workgroup began but was unable to complete. If directed by the Council, the Workgroup could continue drafting potential recommendations for salmon management measures based on the results of the assessment, but would have to meet beyond March 2020 to complete the task. If the Council determines the Workgroup should continue its task, the Workgroup has identified the need for at least two meetings between the April and September 2020 Council meetings.

Any recommendations developed for Council consideration should go through the Council process to solicit industry input and public comment. Once this process is complete, the Council could provide final recommendations for NMFS consideration as part of a long-term Biological Opinion.

Council Action:

- 1. Review the updated draft risk assessment and consider approving as final draft.**
- 2. Provide guidance on future work and proposed schedule.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.3.a, SRKW Workgroup Report 1 (*electronic only*).
2. If received, Public Comments are electronic only (see [e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- E.3 Southern Resident Killer Whale Endangered Species Act Consultation Robin Ehlke
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Review Updated Draft Risk Assessment and Consider Approving as Final Draft; Provide Guidance on Future Work and Proposed Schedule

PFMC
02/12/20