

TESTIMONY OF THE QUINULT INDIAN NATION
ANALYSIS OF PRELIMINARY RANGE OF OCEAN FISHERY ALTERNATIVES FOR
COHO SALMON

The 2021 ocean abundance forecast for Queets natural coho prior to fishing of 3,919 is 32% below the 5,800 lower end of the spawning escapement goal. Given this projection, Queets natural coho spawning escapement would fall below the lower end of its spawning escapement goal for seven consecutive years. Precautionary management actions should be taken in all 2021 fisheries in order to reduce the risk of fisheries significantly contributing to perpetuating chronic or cyclic depression of this stock. Although poor marine survival conditions are a primary contributing factor to the low abundance of this stock, smolt production has been significantly depressed as well, likely due to low spawning escapements.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council has a shared responsibility with the co-managers to ensure the Queets Natural Coho Rebuilding Plan is successful. We request that decision making by the Council and co-managers be informed by full disclosure and transparency of uncertainties regarding abundance forecasts and projections produced by fishery planning models like FRAM.

All of the 2021 salmon management alternatives coupled with last year's terminal area fisheries exceed the maximum allowable exploitation rate of 20% for southern coho management units in low status under the PST Southern Coho Agreement. The minimum spawning escapement for Queets natural coho needs to be 3,150 fish in order to achieve the low status ER cap.

Equitable sharing of the conservation responsibility is required. Queets River terminal fisheries are expected to be severely curtailed, targeting primarily early-timed hatchery coho production. The cumulative impact of southern U.S. ocean fisheries needs to be limited to allow for these terminal area fisheries to occur without disproportionately shifting the risks associated with forecast and management imprecision to the terminal area.

Commitments are needed by co-managers and other partners to address the chronic depressed status of Queets natural coho. We look forward to working with the Pacific Fishery Management Council to develop 2021 fisheries within weak stock constraints and to advance support for future actions to improve production of Queets natural coho.