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

July 23, 2021

Via Electronic Mail

Mr. Charles A. Tracy, Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384
Chuck.Tracy@noaa.gov

Dear Mr. Tracy:

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

- Sacramento River fall-run Chinook salmon (SRFC)
- Snohomish River natural coho salmon
- Hood Canal coho salmon

NMFS' determinations are based on the most recent salmon stock assessments conducted by the Council's Salmon Technical Team (STT),[1] as reported in the Council's Review of 2019 and 2020 Ocean Salmon Fisheries (Tables II-6 and III-7), and Preseason Report III (Pre-III) for 2021 (Table 12). These determinations are consistent with the Council's letter to NMFS regarding the 2021 Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Plan Stock Status Updates, dated May 18, 2021. Information about the newly revised status of the three salmon stocks, as well as pertinent information about each from the FMP that describe the criteria for stock status changes, is provided below (also, see FMP Table 1-1). The two coho salmon stocks are subject to Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) provisions; therefore, no annual catch limits (ACLs) are specified for those stocks.[2]

Stock Rebuilt

In 2018, NMFS determined that five stocks of salmon were *overfished*: SRFC, Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon, and Queets, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Snohomish natural coho salmon (letter from B. Thom to P. Anderson, dated June 18, 2018). Based on data in the Review of 2020 Ocean Salmon Fisheries (Table II-6), NMFS has determined that one overfished salmon stock is *rebuilt*.

[1] The STT is composed of 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.

[2] 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).

- SRFC – the most recent three-year geometric mean of the spawning escapement reported for this stock (2018-2020) is 133,549, which exceeds the stock's spawning escapement required to achieve maximum sustainable yield (S_{MSY}), 122,000 spawners.

Stock Not Overfished-rebuilding

In 2020, NMFS determined that one previously overfished salmon stock was *not overfished - rebuilding*, based on assessment data in the Review of 2019 Ocean Salmon Fisheries. Based on more recent assessment data in the Review of 2020 Ocean Salmon Fisheries, this stock continues to be not overfished-rebuilding, but the stock has not yet rebuilt and continues to be managed under a rebuilding plan.

- Snohomish River natural coho salmon — the most recent three-year geometric mean of spawning escapement reported for this stock in the Review of 2020 Ocean Salmon Fisheries is 34,937, which exceeds the stock's minimum stock size threshold (MSST) of 31,000, but does not exceed the stock's S_{MSY} of 50,000 spawners.

Stock Approaching an Overfished Condition

Based on data in Pre-III for 2021, Table 12, NMFS has determined that one salmon stock is *approaching an overfished condition.*

- Hood Canal coho salmon – the Council's Preseason Report III for 2021 reports the three-year geometric mean of two most recent years of spawning escapement and the projected spawning escapement for this stock in 2021 (2018, 2019, 2021- forecast) is 9,916, which is below the stock's MSST of 10,750.

FMP Criteria for Stock Status Changes

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. When the overfished status determination criteria in the FMP are triggered, the FMP (Section 3.1.4) states the Council shall:

1. notify the NMFS Regional Administrator of this situation;
2. notify pertinent management entities;
3. structure Council area fisheries to reduce the likelihood of the stock remaining overfished, and to mitigate the effects on stock status, and;
4. direct the STT to propose a rebuilding plan for Council consideration within one year.

NMFS has not made any new overfished determinations for salmon stocks under the FMP, based on the assessment data in the Review of 2020 Ocean Salmon Fisheries. Three salmon stocks (Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon, Queets natural coho salmon, and Strait of Juan de Fuca coho salmon) continue to be overfished.

Not Overfished—Rebuilding

The FMP states that, when an overfished salmon stock's three-year geometric mean of spawning escapement exceeds the MSST, but remains below S_{MSY}, the stock status will be recognized as "not overfished-rebuilding." This status level requires no Council action, but rather is used to indicate that stock's status has improved from the overfished level, but that the stock has not yet rebuilt.

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 Administered 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 for the current year, 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

NMFS is developing a proposed rule to remove the rebuilding plan for SRFC from regulation (50 CFR 660.413(b)), now that the stock is rebuilt. Snohomish natural coho salmon, not overfished—rebuilding, continues to be managed under a rebuilding plan at this time. If the Council's next assessment shows that the Hood Canal coho salmon stock no longer meets the criteria for *approaching overfished*, then the NMFS West Coast Region will recommend to the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries that the status of that stock should be changed to *not overfished*.

Sincerely,

Barry A. Thom
Regional Administrator