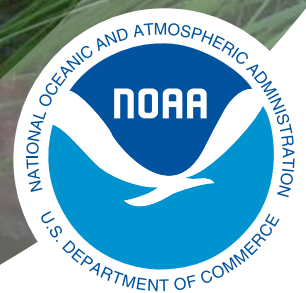




Agenda Item B.1.a
Supplemental NMFS Report 2
November 2021

NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region Fiscal Year 2022 Priorities



NOAA
FISHERIES

A Message from Barry Thom, Regional Administrator

Happy New Year (fiscally speaking at least). Although it may have felt like one very long, tumultuous year, let's pause and recognize that we are truly at the start of something new. Over the course of the last few months we have welcomed aboard a new NOAA leadership team. There is so much positive energy at the agency right now, and I am excited to work with Dr. Spinrad, Janet Coit, and the rest of the new political team. New beginnings are a chance to look ahead, plan, and envision the future. They also serve as an opportunity to reflect on where we have come from, what we accomplished, and lessons learned.

Thinking about our last 365 days, one word that stands out for me is tenacity. We started the year optimistic that life—both at home and in the workplace—would soon return to normal. To our dismay, the pandemic challenged us again to remain calm, adapt, and steer the course through setbacks. Our Region's list of accomplishments this past year is long, but what impresses me the most is you. Your dedication to public service, your solution-oriented mindset, and your pursuit of growth in the face of challenges. All of you balance home and work life within the same walls, yet remain steadfastly committed to accomplishing our fisheries, habitat, protected species, and conservation missions.

We have not been at this alone. This past year I've seen our partnerships strengthen more than ever. Federal, tribal, state, and community organizations have walked with us hand-in-hand to leverage resources and respond to limitations posed by the pandemic. Without them we would not have been successful. Our tribal partners enrich our work by providing key insights into improving consultation and communications, tribal ecological knowledge, and meaningful collaboration. For that we are grateful and remain committed to further advancing our relationships.

Looking at what's to come in 2022, we have a long list of important priorities to tackle, but at the top of our list continues to be taking care of our staff, supporting employee resilience and overall wellness. Interwoven in all of our work is reacting and adapting to climate change—wildfire, drought, rising temperatures,—to help combat its effect on the West Coast fisheries, protected species, and communities. This includes our drought response efforts and our unrelenting emphasis on species recovery, with the major focus this year to complete the five-year status reviews. We will continue to advance aquaculture opportunity areas, and form a West Coast offshore wind energy team to prepare for increased offshore wind development.

We are committed to serving all of our communities and ensuring that our work promotes diversity, equality and inclusion. I'm proud to say that we have modeled that from the inside out. We supported one of our largest and most diverse cohorts of interns this year, providing real-life experience for the next generation of science leaders.

These focused priorities are only a few of the many actions and critical work we do every day across the Region to support the stewardship of living marine resources. It takes many hands to successfully achieve our mission, including all the essential administrative, operational, fiscal, and regulatory work that has given us a reputation of excellence. Certainly, we know we can't predict the future, but we can be sure that whatever comes our way in the new year, we will be ready for it. I'm sure of it.





FY22 Priorities

Cross-Cutting Priorities:

These priorities are supported by multiple actions as indicated by the icons through the document.

CC - Climate Change

Priorities addressing the impact of climate change on our fisheries and protected resources.

SS - Species in the Spotlight

“Species in the Spotlight” brings greater attention to nine endangered marine species most-at-risk of extinction in the near future. These priority activities support the Region’s goal to focus recovery actions and further engage partners and interested citizens to work with us to prevent extinction.

TT - Tribal Trust

Priorities supporting our commitment to upholding our tribal trust responsibilities.

Goal 1 - Adaptively Manage Fisheries and Aquaculture for Sustainability and Economic Competitiveness

Build Resilience in U.S. Seafood and Fishing Sectors

- Complete ocean fisheries harvest specifications and management measures for Pacific coast groundfish, Pacific sardine, and salmon. [CC](#)
- Lead the development of U.S. proposals and work with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) members to adopt conservation and management measures for highly migratory species in the eastern Pacific Ocean.
- Support the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) in developing a Final Proposed Action to improve utilization in the Pacific whiting fishery. [CC](#)

Conserve Habitat Supporting Fisheries

- Collaborate with California partners on the eradication and management response of *Caulerpa prolifera*, an invasive algae.

- Co-host recreational fishing workshops with the Office of Habitat Conservation to identify habitat restoration priorities and projects.
- Implement and strengthen estuarine and marine habitat priority actions by: identifying priority marine habitat for conservation, developing eelgrass comprehensive management plans, improving eelgrass mitigation tools, and collaborating with agency and community partners.

Advance Aquaculture Opportunities on the West Coast

- Sustainably develop offshore aquaculture in southern California by identifying an Offshore Aquaculture Opportunity Area and providing regulatory support for the associated Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Goal 2 - Safeguard Protected Species and Propel Their Recovery

Complete and Advance Priority Endangered Species Act (ESA) Consultations

- Provide technical assistance to Regional Entities, Pacific Gas & Electric, and FERC for Eel River Reservoir management and implementing the Potter Valley Biological Opinion (BiOp).
- Complete a draft programmatic BiOp of the Portland Harbor Superfund Cleanup Efforts.
- Continue reducing the backlog of Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans requiring review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and/or the ESA. [TT](#)
- Provide technical assistance to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and Klamath River Renewal Corporation in support of the Klamath Dam removal. [CC](#) [TT](#)

Advance Reintroduction Efforts for At-Risk Species

- Identify the steps and resources needed to restore the Kingfisher Flat Hatchery in Santa Cruz County, California which was damaged in the CZU Lightning Complex fires. [CC](#) [SS](#)
- Support tribal efforts to assess the feasibility of salmonid reintroduction into the blocked areas of the upper Columbia Basin. [TT](#)
- Continue experimental outplanting efforts to advance endangered white abalone recovery. [SS](#)
- Advance the reintroduction of salmon and steelhead in California’s Central Valley by building partnerships, creating public support, and engaging on key projects. [CC](#) [SS](#)

Engage Partners to Enhance Conservation

- Complete 5-year status reviews and update recovery priorities. [SS](#)
- Develop a proposed rule and supporting documents to update federal commercial and recreational vessel regulations to protect Southern Resident killer whales. [SS](#)
- Assist Washington State and Puget Sound Tribes in developing a new, long-term harvest management agreement for Puget Sound Chinook salmon. [TT](#)
- Respond to California drought by implementing Voluntary Drought Agreements and programmatic in-stream flow Safe Harbor Agreements, and work with partners on outreach and education, enforcement actions, targeted flow augmentation, monitoring, and fish rescues. [CC](#) [SS](#)
- Assist California, Oregon, and Washington in their draft Conservation Plans and Incidental Take Authorization applications for entangled ESA-listed whales and sea turtles.
- Represent NOAA on the U.S. negotiating team by providing technical, science and policy support for modernizing the Columbia River Treaty with Canada. [CC](#) [TT](#)

Protect and Conserve Anadromous Fish Habitat

- Integrate the best available science on the impacts of stormwater into individual and programmatic consultations on transportation infrastructure projects in Puget Sound and the Lower Columbia/ Washington Coast.
- Develop a Stormwater Best Management Practices document for use by West Coast Region (WCR) staff in conducting ESA Section 7 and Essential Fish Habitat consultations.
- Release a draft EIS for the Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan.
- Implement the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund grant process to advance salmon and steelhead recovery and improve the status of vulnerable populations in the face of climate change and other threats. [CC](#)

Support Responsible Offshore Wind Energy Development

- Select a Wind Energy Coordinator, and stand up a WCR, Northwest (NWFSC) and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers (SWFSC) offshore wind energy team to enhance engagement with Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and stakeholders. [CC](#)



Goal 3 - Diversify Our Workforce and Support Our Mission Accomplishment Through Organizational Excellence

Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Execute WCR's hiring and staffing requirements to advance diversity, equity, & inclusion (DEI).
- Support a culture of inclusivity by providing training to supervisors to engage staff effectively on DEI issues.
- Develop a plan to assess implementation of the WCR D&I Framework and promote staff engagement in the use of the WCR D&I Toolbox.
- Support regional internship and fellowship programs by recruiting, training, and mentoring interns and fellows with a DEI lens.

Enhance Total Worker Wellness

- Continue to support WCR office reintegration in accordance with DOC, NOAA and NMFS guidance while ensuring staff safety, flexibility, and wellness.

Enhance Communications

- Continue to cultivate a communications-savvy WCR by improving staff access to communication resources, advancing early identification and preparation for controversial issues, and developing and deploying consistent region-wide messages.

Invest in Learning and Development

- Initiate Year 3 of the WCR's Emerging Leaders Development Program to advance leadership development.

Promote Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Support revisions to the PFMC's Regional Operating Agreement by coordinating with PFMC, NWFSC, SWFSC, and Offices of General Counsel and Enforcement.
- Coordinate implementation of an updated West Coast Geographic Strategic Plan and integrate the new NOAA Fisheries Strategic Plan into the WCR planning process.
- Coordinate with the NWFSC and SWFSC to ensure the Western Regional Action Plan reflects the regional science needed to implement the NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy. [CC](#)

Photos: Cover, from top, left - white abalone, CDFW; Center - Santa Barbara recreational fishing, Shutterstock; Right - Pacific sardines, Dale Sweetnam, NOAA; Main - Jenny Creek in the Klamath Basin, Don Flickinger, NOAA. Page 1 - Sacramento Winter-run Chinook salmon juveniles, California Department of Fish & Wildlife. Page 2 - kelp bass hides in eelgrass, Santa Cruz Island, Adam Obaza, NOAA. Page 3, left - Iron Gate Dam and reservoir on the Klamath River, Bureau of Reclamation; Center - a SRKW and a whale watching boat, Candice Emmons, NWFSC; Right - Southern California longline mussel harvest, NOAA.