

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON THE SOUTHERN OREGON/NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COHO HARVEST CONTROL RULE – FINAL ACTION

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) met January 20, 2022 to revisit the harvest control rule for Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast (SONCC) coho. Ms. Susan Bishop of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed the NMFS report (Agenda Item B.1.a, NMFS Report 1) and summarized NMFS concerns with the November action taken by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and provided some suggested pathways forward.

The SAS also reviewed the report submitted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW, Agenda Item B.1.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1) and the joint report from CDFW and the tribal co-managers (Agenda Item B.1.a, Supplemental Joint Tribal-CDFW Report 1). Both reports illuminate the considerable work that has been done in the Trinity watershed to enhance habitat for salmonids to provide regulatory protections for coho in California, and the joint report describes a suite of actions intended to improve hatchery broodstock selection and changes to coho collection and monitoring actions.

The SAS understands the concerns of NMFS, but notes that the analysis of risk by the SONCC Coho Salmon Ad-hoc Technical Workgroup is often based on limited or dated information that may not reflect the benefits of the considerable improvements made within the Trinity watershed. For example, the dataset used estimate of Trinity coho productivity encompass the years of 1997-2016 much of which predates ongoing restoration efforts.

The SAS recommends that the Council rescind its motion from November 2021 and consider adopting the recommendations of Supplemental Joint Tribal-CDFW Report 1 regarding exploitation rates of 15 percent for most SONCC coho stocks and exploitation rates as high as 17 percent for the Trinity River stocks.

The SAS also supports and the cooperative approach to co-management of coho salmon but remains uncertain about freshwater exploitation rates or sharing arrangements between co-managers or between Oregon and California. That uncertainty impinges on our ability to fully understand the true extent of impacts to ocean fisheries.

The SAS wants to reiterate our feeling that this process has been compressed, that a full review of the effects of the considerable habitat improvements has not been included in the risk assessment, and that removal of the Klamath River dams will undoubtedly have significant impacts to all fish species in the Klamath Basin. The SAS requests that NMFS review the exploitation rates for SONCC coho at a minimum of every 5 years.