



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

October 27, 2022

Sent Via Email

Mr. Merrick Burden, Executive Director  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384  
Merrick.j.burden@noaa.gov

Dear Mr. Burden:

This letter is to inform the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) that NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has completed its evaluation of the status of Pacific salmon stocks managed under the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and determined that the status of one stock (Hood Canal coho salmon) has changed, as described below.

NMFS' determination is based on the most recent salmon stock assessments conducted by the Council's Salmon Technical Team (STT)<sup>1</sup> and as reported in the Council's Review of 2021 Ocean Salmon Fisheries (Tables II-6 and III-7) and Preseason Report III (Pre-III) for 2022 (Table 12). Information about the revised status of the Hood Canal coho salmon stock and pertinent information from the FMP that describes the criteria for stock status changes is provided below (also, see FMP Table 1-1). Note that this coho salmon stock is subject to Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) provisions; therefore, no annual catch limits (ACLs) are specified for this stock.<sup>2</sup>

### **Stock No Longer Approaching an Overfished Condition**

In 2021, NMFS determined that Hood Canal coho salmon was *approaching an overfished condition*, based on assessment data in Pre-III for 2021. Based on updated assessment data in Pre-III for 2022 (Table 12), NMFS has determined that Hood Canal coho salmon is *not overfished*.

### **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 minimum stock size threshold (MSST). When the

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<sup>1</sup> 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 United States (U.S.) Fish and Wildlife Service, and treaty tribes.

<sup>2</sup> 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).



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.

After consideration of the applicable criteria, NMFS has determined that no new stocks should be added to the list of stocks identified as overfished at this time. Based on the assessment data in the Review of 2021 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 maximum sustainable yield spawning escapement ( $S_{MSY}$ ), the stock status will be recognized as "not overfished-rebuilding." This status level requires no Council action but rather is used to indicate that the stock's status has improved from the overfished level, but the stock has not yet rebuilt.

In 2020, NMFS determined that Snohomish River natural coho salmon was *not overfished-rebuilding*, based on assessment data in the Review of 2020 Ocean Salmon Fisheries. Based on more recent assessment data in the Review of 2021 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.

### ***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 Administrator 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. At this time, NMFS has not identified any stocks that qualify as "approaching overfished."

### **Conclusion**

If the next stock assessment shows that overfishing and overfished status of any of the stocks mentioned in the letter has since ended, then the NMFS West Coast Region will recommend to

the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries that the status of the appropriate stocks should be changed *to not subject to overfishing and not overfished*. If the three-year geometric mean of the two most recent postseason estimates of spawning escapement and the current preseason forecast of spawning escapement is below the MSST for Hood Canal coho salmon in the future, the Council may consider taking further action, which may include structuring Council area fisheries to avoid the stock becoming overfished and to mitigate the effects on stock status, as recommended in the FMP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott Rumsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott M. Rumsey, Ph.D.  
Acting Regional Administrator