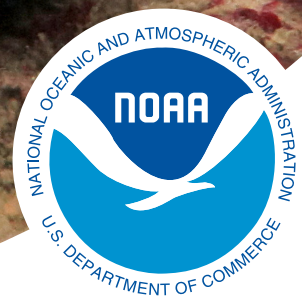




Agenda Item C.2.a
Supplemental NMFS Report 2
November 2023

NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region Fiscal Year 2024 Priorities



NOAA
FISHERIES

A Message from Jennifer Quan, Regional Administrator

Dear Colleagues,

We are entering a crucial year for fish, fisheries, our West Coast marine ecosystem and the communities that depend on it. We face some of the greatest challenges we ever have as climate change unfolds around us, but we have significant new resources to meet those challenges. I am confident that if we apply those resources as science tells us, we will improve the resilience of species and fisheries that contribute to the West Coast ecosystem and economy for a long time to come.

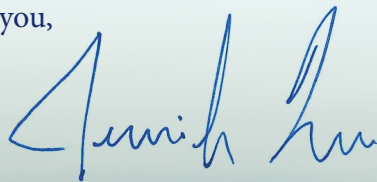
This is my first year as Administrator of the West Coast Region, and I am proud to share these priorities as our blueprint for the next year. They build on our collective success and hard work over the past few years. I am confident that all of you and our many partners and stakeholders will make the most of the important opportunities that these priorities represent.

The diverse priorities reach every one of you. They include advancing the largest dam removal project in history (in the Klamath Basin), the largest salmon reintroduction ever (in the Upper Columbia Basin), and with the opening of offshore conservation areas to renewed non-trawl fishing - one of the greatest fisheries comebacks we have seen in the rebound of rockfish off the West Coast. They include new ways of reaching underserved communities and building the next generation of fisheries biologists, managers, and other leaders who will succeed us here. We are returning endangered salmon to spawning grounds where they can thrive, informing new uses of our ocean in offshore wind and aquaculture, and growing a new fishery for a healthy swordfish stock that reduces risk to protected whales and sea turtles. To help make this all happen, we will deliver unprecedented new funding to prepare commercial and recreational fisheries, fish hatcheries, and our most economically and ecologically important species to weather the continuing impacts of climate change.

The magnitude and ambition of these priorities means that we must work, learn, and grow together. Many of these will take coordination across our many offices and divisions. We will rely on our excellent administrative, budget, and information technology staff. We will also require the growing support and participation of tribes, states, businesses, communities and many others who also care deeply about and often depend on our marine species and the environment that they inhabit.

Please review these priorities and then join me in turning them into successes for the West Coast ecosystem, economy, communities, and each other.

Thank you,



FY24 Priorities

Cross-Cutting Themes

Four cross-cutting themes appear across our strategic goals and actions: Species in the Spotlight, Tribal Trust, Climate Change, and Equity & Environmental Justice. These themes are indicated in the text below.

SS - Species in the Spotlight

NOAA Fisheries' "Species in the Spotlight" program brings greater attention to nine endangered marine species most at risk of extinction in the near future.

TT - Tribal Trust

Priorities supporting our commitment to uphold our tribal treaty and trust responsibilities.

CC - Climate Change

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

EEJ - Equity & Environmental Justice

Priorities that advance equity and accessibility of services and benefits to underserved and under-resourced communities.

Goal 1 - Adaptively manage fisheries for sustainability and economic competitiveness.

Build Resilience in U.S. Seafood and Fishing Sectors

- Implement fishery harvest specifications and management measures for salmon, Pacific halibut, Pacific sardine, Pacific mackerel, and the central sub-population of Northern Pacific anchovy.
- Implement an electronic monitoring program in the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery.
- Negotiate with Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission members to adopt conservation and management measures for tropical tuna species and Pacific bluefin tuna. **CC**
- Allocate funding under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for Mitchell Act hatchery deferred maintenance and repair needs. Execute an Interagency Agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to administer IRA funding for non-Mitchell Act deferred maintenance and repair needs for tribal hatcheries. **TT**
- Review exempted fishing permit applications to allow fishing for

North Pacific swordfish and other marketable highly migratory species with alternative gear.

- Host discussions with West Coast saltwater recreational anglers to solicit input on revising the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy. **CC EEJ**

Conserve & Restore Habitat Supporting Fisheries

- Support tribal efforts to assess the feasibility of salmon reintroduction into blocked areas of the upper Columbia Basin consistent with tribal trust responsibilities. **TT**

Support the Responsible Development of Offshore Activities

- Publish a draft programmatic environmental impact statement for Southern California Offshore Aquaculture Opportunity Areas.
- Engage with Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), state agencies, tribes, developers, and community members to provide fisheries related technical assistance that informs offshore wind siting and development. **CC**

Goal 2 - Safeguard protected species and propel their recovery.

Advance Reintroduction Efforts for At-Risk Species

- Continue experimental outplanting efforts to advance endangered white abalone recovery. **SS**
- Provide technical assistance to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and other partners to promote fish passage and salmon recovery in key watersheds and projects, including the Eel River fish, flow, and reservoir management project; Klamath Dam removal; and

the Anderson Dam seismic retrofit project. **CC**

- Provide technical assistance on a feasibility study to build a new hatchery south of San Francisco for endangered Central California Coast coho. **SS**
- Coordinate with our partners to facilitate future release of reintroduced winter-run and spring-run Chinook salmon above Shasta Dam. **CC**

Complete & Advance Priority Endangered Species Act Consultations

- Update Endangered Species Act (ESA) and National Environmental Policy Act analyses for southeast Alaska salmon fisheries and the hatchery production of prey for endangered Southern Resident killer whales. **SS**
- Provide ESA section 7 pre-consultation and technical assistance to the Bureau of Reclamation for the Yakima Basin Operation and Maintenance Project. **CC**
- Provide a draft programmatic biological opinion for reinitiation of Washington Federal Highway Administration-funded road projects.

Engage Partners to Enhance Conservation & Recovery

- Promote the conservation of protected resources by engaging with BOEM, state agencies, tribes, developers, and community members to provide technical assistance that informs offshore wind siting and development. **CC**
- Evaluate the proposed long-term harvest agreements in the Puget Sound Chinook salmon resource management plan. **TT**
- Advance actions to reduce threats to Southern Resident killer whales from vessel and noise impacts, including partnerships to implement and monitor voluntary ship slow downs, promote responsible viewing, and participate in Washington State initiatives to evaluate and reduce impacts from whale watching. **SS**
- Complete 5-year ESA status reviews for twelve salmonids: Sacramento River winter-run Chinook, Central Valley spring-run Chinook, California Central Valley steelhead, Northern California steelhead, California Coastal Chinook, Central California Coast steelhead, Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast coho, Upper

Willamette River Chinook, Upper Willamette River steelhead, Hood Canal summer chum, Puget Sound Chinook, and Puget Sound steelhead.

- Continue reducing the backlog of hatchery and genetic management plan reviews to advance biologically-based artificial propagation strategies that conserve and recover salmon and steelhead populations.
- Coordinate with partners to develop and implement a summer water operations plan that protects Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon in Butte Creek. **CC**
- Represent NOAA on the U.S. negotiating team by providing technical, science, and policy support to modernize the Columbia River Treaty regime with Canada. **CC**
- Support the development of a long-term solution to restore salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin. **TT**
- Develop priority “Treaty Rights at Risk” initiatives with federal and tribal leaders in Western Washington. **TT**
- Lead a federal caucus to develop a settlement and ESA consultation for Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing of Seattle City Light’s Skagit Hydroelectric Project. **CC**

Conserve & Restore Anadromous Fish Habitat

- Improve Pacific salmon habitat and fish passage through implementation of the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund competitive grant process, and by providing technical assistance to other federal agencies to maximize Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and IRA investments.
- Enhance the Salish Sea Nearshore Programmatic Calculator by integrating input from the Center for Independent Experts. **TT**

Goal 3 - Diversify our workforce, promote equity and environmental justice, and improve our mission performance through organizational excellence.

Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility

- Using our best hiring practices guide, advance diversity and inclusion when implementing the West Coast Region’s recruitment and hiring processes.
- Conduct an assessment of the West Coast Region’s diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) climate and culture, and enhance staff use of our DEIA Toolbox.
- Develop a West Coast regional equity & environmental justice implementation plan and continue engagement with underserved and under-resourced communities. **EEJ**

Enhance Total Worker Wellness

- Support worker wellness and a culture of belonging in a hybrid environment by creating opportunities to foster meaningful connections among staff, providing wellness programs and work-life balance flexibility, and addressing workload and burnout.
- Prioritize workload to further address burnout; manage expectations with external partners.

Invest in Learning & Development

- Promote and support internship and fellowship opportunities, including NOAA-sponsored undergraduate programs.
- Provide tribal relations training and guidance to support tribal government-to-government consultation and help West Coast Region staff build successful working relationships with our tribal partners. **TT**

Enhance Strategic Communications and Outreach

- Support NOAA’s efforts to promote the returns on investment of the historic BIL and IRA funding for fish passage, habitat restoration, and tribal priorities.
- Partner with tribes and federal and state agencies to communicate the importance of hatcheries to sustaining tribal treaty rights, and as a climate adaptation and resilience tool. **TT**
- Build and implement a communications plan to promote the value of freshwater investments, especially in relation to increased salmon returns.

Promote Operational Efficiency & Effectiveness

- Develop succession planning tools for West Coast Region supervisors.
- Continue to develop the West Coast Region’s records management program by drafting guidance, completing an inventory of our federal records, creating an official file plan, and transferring paper federal records to the National Archives and Records Administration.

PHOTOS: Cover from top left - Recreational fishing. Credit: Shutterstock; Center: Heavy equipment removing Copco Dam 2 on the Klamath River. Credit: Shane Anderson, Whitewater Films; Right: Abalone outplanting. Credit: M. Ready, Michael Ready Photography; Bottom: Sunflower sea stars. Credit: Ralph Pace, The Nature Conservancy. Page 1 - Oyster aquaculture, Winchester Bay, Oregon. Credit: Shutterstock. Page 2 - Schooling pacific sardines. Credit: Dale Sweetnam, NOAA Fisheries.