



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200
LONG BEACH, CA 90802

October 13, 2023

Agenda Item D.1.a

Sent Via Email

Supplemental NMFS Report 1

November 2023

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

Re: 2023 Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan Stock Status Determinations

Dear Mr. Burden:

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 Pacific salmon stocks managed under the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP):

- Snohomish coho salmon
- Strait of Juan de Fuca coho salmon
- Queets spring/summer Chinook salmon

NMFS' determinations are based on the most recent salmon stock assessments conducted by the Council's Salmon Technical Team (STT),¹ and as reported in the Council's Review of 2022 Ocean Salmon Fisheries (Tables II-6 and III-7) and Preseason Report III for 2023 (Table 12). These determinations are consistent with the Council's letter to NMFS regarding the 2023 Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Plan Stock Status Updates, dated June 2, 2023. Information about the newly revised status of the three stocks as well as pertinent information about each from the FMP that describes the criteria for stock status changes, is provided below (also, see FMP Table 1-1). These 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*: Sacramento River fall-run Chinook salmon, Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon (KRFC), Queets natural coho salmon, Strait of Juan de Fuca natural coho salmon, and Snohomish River natural coho salmon (letter from B. Thom to P. Anderson, dated June 18, 2018). NMFS determined these stocks met the criteria for an overfished stock because the 3-year geometric means of escapement (2014-2017 (2016 not yet available)) was below their Minimum Stock Size Thresholds (MSST). In 2021, NMFS determined

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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and treaty tribes.

² Stocks managed under an international agreement to which the U.S. is a party are exempted from the Magnuson-Stevens Act 303(a)(15) requirement for specifying ACLs; see CFR 600.310(h)(2).



that the Sacramento River fall-run Chinook salmon stock was rebuilt (letter from B. Thom to P. Anderson, dated July 23, 2021). NMFS has determined that an additional one of the four remaining overfished salmon stocks is *rebuilt*.

- Snohomish River natural coho salmon – the most recent three-year geometric mean of the spawning escapement reported for this stock (2019-2021) is 55,154, which exceeds the stock’s spawning escapement required to achieve maximum sustainable yield (S_{MSY}), 50,000 spawners.

Stock Not Overfished-Rebuilding

In 2018, NMFS published an *overfished* designation for Strait of Juan de Fuca natural coho salmon based on the geometric mean of escapement in 2014-2016 of 6,842, and a rebuilding plan was adopted by the Council in 2019 and by NMFS in 2021. Based on the more recent assessment data in the Review of 2022 Ocean Salmon Fisheries, this stock now meets the criteria for being classified as *not overfished-rebuilding*.

- Strait of Juan de Fuca natural coho salmon – the most recent three-year geometric mean (2019-2021) of spawning escapement reported for this stock in the Review of 2022 Ocean Salmon Fisheries is 9,374, which exceeds the MSST of 7,000, but does not exceed the stock’s S_{MSY} of 11,000 spawners.

Stock Overfished

Based on assessment data in the Review of 2022 Ocean Salmon Fisheries (Table II-6) the following salmon stock has been determined to be overfished:

- Queets River spring/summer Chinook salmon – the most recent three-year geometric mean (2019-2021) is 314, which is below MSST of 350, therefore Queets River spring/summer Chinook salmon meets the criteria for *overfished* status.

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.

As stated above, NMFS has determined that one new salmon stock, Queets River spring/summer Chinook salmon, has met the criteria for *overfished*. Pursuant to the requirements of Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act section 304(e), the Council must prepare and implement a rebuilding plan within two years of the date of this notification letter. In order to meet this deadline, Council actions should be submitted to NMFS within 15 months of this notification to ensure sufficient time for the Secretary to implement the measures, if approved.

Based on the assessment data in the Review of 2022 Ocean Salmon Fisheries, two stocks (KRFC and Queets River natural 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 the stock’s status has improved from the overfished level but the stock has not yet been rebuilt.

As stated above, Strait of Juan de Fuca coho salmon has been determined to be not overfished-rebuilding, but the stock has not yet been rebuilt and continues to be managed under a rebuilding plan.

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 the more recent assessment date in the Review of 2022 Ocean Salmon Fisheries, this stock is now *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:

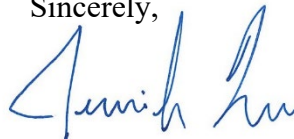
1. notify the NMFS Regional Administrator of this situation;
2. notify pertinent management entities, and;
3. structure Council area fisheries to avoid the stock becoming overfished and to mitigate the effects on stock status.

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 Queets River spring/summer Chinook salmon stock continues to meet the criteria for *overfished* in the next stock assessment, the requirement to submit a rebuilding plan for approval by the Secretary of Commerce within 15 months of this letter (October 13, 2023) remains in place.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Quan
Regional Administrator