

SALMON TECHNICAL TEAM PROGRESS REPORT ON QUEETS SPRING/SUMMER CHINOOK REBUILDING PLAN

In 2022, Queets River natural spring/summer Chinook salmon (Queets sp/su Chinook) met the criteria for overfished status. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) informed the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) of the status determination change at the November 2023 Council meeting, and the Council subsequently directed the Salmon Technical Team (STT) to propose a rebuilding plan for Council consideration within one year.

Since January 2024, members of the STT, tribal and state comanagers, and Federal and Council staff have collaborated to establish a timeline for the development of the rebuilding plan, identify factors that may have led to the overfished status, determine data needs, and assign tasks to individual staff members and management entities.

One of the challenges in developing a rebuilding plan and associated management alternatives for Queets sp/su Chinook is the limited data available for this stock. The stock is a small component of the far-north-migrating coastal Chinook stock complex. Historically, members of this stock complex that are tagged and well-sampled are not significantly intercepted in Council-area ocean fisheries. Data on ocean fishery impacts for this stock are limited, in part due to the absence of a representative spring/summer run coded-wire-tag stock for the Washington coast. All freshwater fisheries have been closed or extremely limited since 2000. Some data are available for estimations of freshwater survival rates, but there are very limited data available to estimate marine survival rates. Data on habitat and ocean conditions are being collected and summarized.

Draft management alternatives have not been developed at this time. Given the lack of data for evaluating ocean harvest impacts in Council-area ocean fisheries, the range of alternatives will likely be narrow. Future recommendations will likely focus on habitat restoration efforts and bolstering data on the stock.

The STT and comanagers will continue to develop the rebuilding plan, which will eventually include draft alternatives and socioeconomic analysis. The STT will work over the summer and provide a draft rebuilding plan in time for the advanced September briefing book for Council consideration. The Council is scheduled to adopt a draft plan for public review in September 2024 and adopt a final rebuilding plan in November 2024 for recommendation to NMFS.