



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

Agenda Item E.1  
Attachment 1  
September 2024

August 1, 2024

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

Re: 2024 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 two Pacific salmon stocks managed under the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP):

- Strait of Juan de Fuca coho salmon
- Queets natural coho salmon

NMFS' determinations are 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 2023 Ocean Salmon Fisheries (Tables II-6 and III-7) and Preseason Report III for 2024 (Table 12). These determinations are consistent with the Council's letter to NMFS regarding the 2024 Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Plan Stock Status Updates, dated May 7, 2024. Information about the newly revised status of the two 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 3-1). These salmon stocks are subject to Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) provisions; therefore, no annual catch limits (ACLs) are specified for those stocks.<sup>2</sup>

### Stocks 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 three-year geometric means of escapement (2014-2017 [2016 not yet available]) was below their Minimum Stock Size Thresholds (MSST). In 2021, NMFS determined that the Sacramento River fall-run Chinook salmon stock was rebuilt (letter from B. Thom to P. Anderson, dated July 23, 2021). In 2023, NMFS determined that the

<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 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).



Snohomish River natural coho salmon stock was rebuilt (letter from J. Quan to M. Burden, dated October 13, 2023). NMFS has now determined that two additional overfished salmon stocks are *rebuilt*.

- Strait of Juan de Fuca coho salmon – The most recent three-year geometric mean of the spawning escapement reported for this stock (2020-2022) is 14,461, which exceeds the stock’s spawning escapement required to achieve maximum sustainable yield (S<sub>MSY</sub>), 11,000 spawners.
- Queets natural coho salmon – The most recent three-year geometric mean of the spawning escapement reported for this stock (2020-2022) is 6,624, which exceeds the stock’s spawning escapement required to achieve S<sub>MSY</sub> 5,800 spawners.

## **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.

In 2023, NMFS determined that the Queets River spring/summer Chinook salmon stock met the criteria for *overfished*. Pursuant to the requirements of Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act section 304(e), the Council is preparing and will implement a rebuilding plan.

Based on the assessment data in the Review of 2023 Ocean Salmon Fisheries, Queets River spring/summer Chinook salmon and KRFC 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<sub>MSY</sub>, 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.

### ***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.”

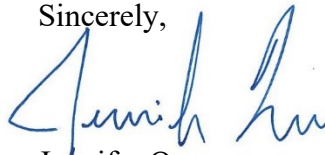
***Rebuilt***

The FMP states that the default criterion for determining that an overfished stock is rebuilt is when the 3-year geometric mean spawning escapement exceeds SMSY; the Council may consider additional criteria for rebuilt status when developing a rebuilding plan and recommend such criteria, to be implemented subject to Secretarial approval.

**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* or *rebuilt* based on the above criteria.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Quan  
Regional Administrator