

TRIBAL REPORT ON
FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

In June of 2024, the Salmon Technical Team (STT) Chair was notified of a number of errors in the salmon SAFE documents that resulted in a failure to identify Grays Harbor Fall Chinook as subject to overfishing in 2016, 2021, 2022, and 2024. These mistakes were communicated to the Council in November 2024 (Agenda Item F.4.a, Supplemental STT Report 1, November 2024). According to the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP), “The STT will report postseason exploitation rates in the annual SAFE document, and when overfishing occurs, the Council shall:

- 1) notify the NMFS West Coast Regional Administrator of the STT’s findings;
- 2) direct the STT to assess the mortality rates in fisheries impacting the stock of concern and report their findings;
- 3) immediately take action to ensure Council area fisheries are not contributing to overfishing, and;
- 4) notify pertinent management agencies of the stock’s status and the contribution of various fisheries to the total exploitation rate.”

The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) wishes to express our disappointment that this error was not immediately shared with the pertinent management agencies. Given that this stock has been subject overfishing in three out of the last four years, timely communication may have allowed the co-managers to consider inseason action to reduce impacts. It could have also allowed for coordination with the Alaska Region of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), since Grays Harbor Fall Chinook are far north migrating and are impacted by fisheries in Southeast Alaska as well.

Washington coastal Chinook stocks such as Grays Harbor Fall Chinook are vital to the exercise of tribal treaty rights. The Quinault Indian Nation has requested completion of these steps no later than December 31, 2024. This gives the tribal governments time to prepare for international and domestic post-season discussions and pre-season planning for 2025 based on timely information about the stock’s status and the contribution of various fisheries to the total exploitation rate. Further, the NWIFC requests that NMFS provide a report for the advanced briefing book in March detailing what actions they will be taking to ensure that overfishing on this stock is not occurring in federal waters. This will likely need to be coordinated with the Alaska Region.

While Council fisheries that affect Grays Harbor Fall Chinook may now be complete, they were not at the time this error was first identified. The delay in notification of the Council of this error should not be an excuse to further delay fulfilling the responsibilities outlined in the Pacific Coast Salmon FMP.