

## THE NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT 1 REGULATORY ACTIVITIES

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provides this report on issues relevant to ocean salmon harvest management in 2025.

### **Status of Inadequate Progress Review**

Section 304(e)(7) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), and regulations at 50 CFR 600.310(j)(3)(iv), requires NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to periodically review the rebuilding progress of stocks being managed under rebuilding plans. NMFS' West Coast Region (WCR) reviewed the rebuilding progress for four stocks of Pacific Coast salmon being managed under rebuilding plans approved by NMFS in 2020 and 2021. Three of the four stocks have since rebuilt. The following information provides an update on rebuilding progress for the Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon (KRFC) stock.

The criteria in the National Standard 1 (NS 1) guidelines [50 CFR 600.310(j)(3)(iv)] state that the Secretary may find that a stock is not making adequate rebuilding progress if either:

- 1) The total fishing mortality rate (F) required to rebuild the stock within the rebuilding timeframe ( $F_{\text{rebuild}}$ ) or the annual catch limit (ACL) associated with  $F_{\text{rebuild}}$  is exceeded, and accountability measures (AMs) are not correcting the operational issue that caused the overage, nor addressing any biological consequences to the stock or stock complex resulting from the overage when it is known (*Per Amendment 16, ACLs and other status determination criteria for salmon are based on spawning escapement (S), not catch. We use the term  $S_{ACL}$ .*); or
- 2) The rebuilding expectations of a stock or stock complex are significantly changed due to new and unexpected information about the status of the stock.

We concluded that KRFC did not meet either of the NS1 criteria for inadequate progress. Therefore, the WCR is not recommending a determination of inadequate progress as a result of its review and does not propose recommending additional management measures to the Council.

- Escapement has been well above  $S_{ACL}$  during rebuilding.  $F_{MSY}$  has not been exceeded during rebuilding; therefore the stock has not been experiencing overfishing. Annual escapement and the three-year geometric mean escapement has increased under rebuilding. The rebuilding plan identified poor productivity due to freshwater and marine environmental conditions as the proximate cause of the overfished status.
- The rebuilding expectations have not significantly changed due to new and unexpected information about the status of the stock. Therefore, they do not meet Criterion #2. Over the last several years, four dams on the Klamath River were removed which is expected to improve freshwater conditions for KRFC and contribute to rebuilding the stock but the restoration is anticipated to take a decade or more (several brood cycles).

## **Rebuilding Plans and Amendments**

### *Removing Queets and Strait of Juan de Fuca Coho Rebuilding Plans from Regulation:*

NMFS is proposing to remove the rebuilding plans for the Queets River coho salmon stock and Strait of Juan de Fuca coho salmon stock from regulation, as these stocks are rebuilt and are no longer required to be managed under a rebuilding plan. The proposed rule to remove the rebuilding plans should publish in the Federal Register at the beginning of March 2025. The proposed rule will have a 30-day public comment period.

### *California Coastal (CC) Chinook Salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) Regulatory Amendment:*

In February 2024, NMFS issued a biological opinion analyzing the CC Chinook salmon conservation objective (i.e., 16 percent limit on the ocean harvest rate of age-4 KRFC) along with the management framework for CC Chinook salmon recommended by the Council. Management measures within the management framework include a buffer applied to the conservation objective based on performance error and other relevant factors, an allowable harvest level, landing and possession limits, and in-season management for the commercial troll fishery. NMFS determined that authorization of the ocean salmon fishery in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) through promulgation of regulations implementing the salmon FMP including the CC Chinook salmon conservation objective and implementation of the framework would not jeopardize the CC Chinook salmon ESU. NMFS adopted the management framework by regulatory amendment which was published [08/14/2024](#) and effective September 13, 2024.

## **Status of Information Requests related to Performance Review of Lower Columbia River (LCR) Abundance Based Management Matrix:**

Under the terms of the current biological opinion completed in 2012 (NMFS 2012) and as requested by the PFMC, NMFS reviews the Abundance Based Management (ABM) matrix for Lower Columbia River (LCR) tule fall Chinook every three to five years. The purpose of the review is to assess the key assumptions and expectations used in the derivation of the matrix, and assess its performance. In its 2024 performance review, NMFS concluded that fisheries managed under the ABM matrix continue to be consistent with the outcomes and expectations of the 2012 biological opinion. In prior reviews of the ABM, NMFS determined that data were insufficient for forecasting abundance of LCR natural tules (NMFS 2015; 2019). However, the available time series of LCR natural tules since implementing the ABM is now over 10 years long and methodologies to forecast LRH abundance have continued to evolve since 2012. NMFS (2012) recommended continuing to examine forecast methods, the relationship between LRH and natural-origin fish, and population specific information used in the risk analysis. Consistent with this expectation, in its 2024 review, NMFS recommended an evaluation of whether:

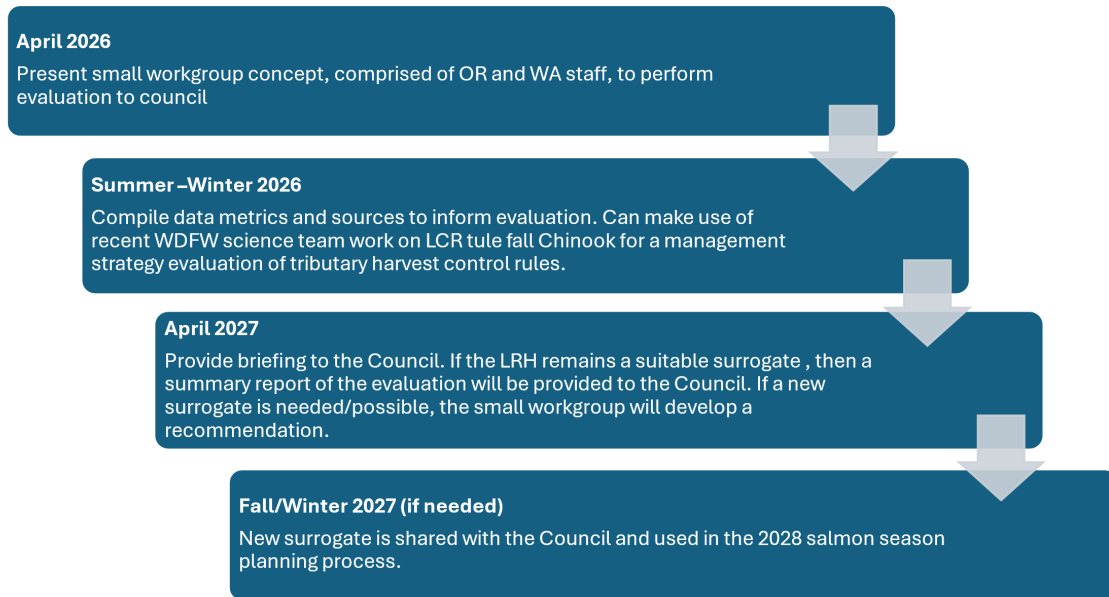
- sufficient data exist to forecast LCR natural tule Chinook and, if so, an assessment of the accuracy of such forecasts and the feasibility of producing them in a time and manner that would be informative for managing fisheries.

- the available information indicates that the LRH abundance remains a suitable surrogate for natural LCR tule abundance going forward.

ODFW and WDFW committed to evaluating existing data to determine the feasibility of forecasting LCR natural tule fall Chinook, the accuracy of such forecasts, and any impediments to producing them in a time and manner to inform fishery management. An evaluation of whether LRH abundance remains a suitable surrogate for LCR natural tules must be completed in time to inform the next periodic review of the LCR ABM matrix and to inform related issues in other fishery management forums.

NMFS has worked with the co-managers to develop the following general workplan and timeline for this evaluation. We will work with the WDFW and ODFW managers to refine it prior to April 2026. The comanagers and Council may want to consider what additional PFMC engagement may be needed.

#### Evaluate if LRH remains a suitable surrogate for LCR natural tule fall Chinook



References:

- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). 2012. Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(2) Biological Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Consultation. Effects of the Pacific Coast Salmon Plan Fisheries on the Lower Columbia River Chinook Evolutionarily Significant Unit. Dept. of Comm. NMFS, NWR, Salmon Management Division. NWR-2011-6415. April 26, 2012.
- NMFS. 2015. Three Year Review of the Lower Columbia River tule fall Chinook Abundance-based Harvest Matrix. Supplemental NMFS report to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. Agenda Item F.1.a. February 17, 2015. 7 p.
- NMFS. 2019. Three Year Review of the Lower Columbia River tule fall Chinook Abundance-based Harvest Matrix. Supplemental NMFS report to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. Agenda Item D.1.a. March 7, 2019. 9 p.