

STAFF REPORT ON SACRAMENTO RIVER FALL CHINOOK FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT DEVELOPMENT

In April 2025, the Council tasked Council staff with developing a document that outlines a proposed process for comprehensively updating the Sacramento River Fall Chinook (SRFC) management framework (reference points, conservation objective, and harvest control rule).

In September 2025, the Council reviewed the [document](#) prepared by staff in response to this tasking and discussed further exploring alternative management frameworks for SRFC through the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendment process. The Council requested staff develop an additional report that includes further detail on the FMP amendment components, a description of the expertise needed to develop and analyze FMP amendment alternatives, and a detailed timeline.

To address the Council's request, staff have developed this report, which includes: (I) Progress and Guidance to Date; (II) Scientific Peer Review Process; (III) Additional Considerations Parallel to the FMP Amendment Process; (IV) Skillsets and Expertise for Developing the FMP Amendment; and (V) Continued Role of the Current Sacramento River fall Chinook Workgroup; and (VI) Summary and Key Questions. A tentative timeline for developing the FMP amendment is outlined in Agenda Item G.4, Attachment 2.

Scoping for the FMP amendment is currently scheduled for the September 2026 Council meeting, with preparatory work planned for the summer of 2026. In November 2025, the Council should review the materials provided and consider the questions outlined in this Section VI.

I. Progress and Guidance to Date

The SRFC FMP amendment will consider changes to four components: F_{MSY} , S_{MSY} , conservation objective, and harvest control rule. To date, the Council has made differing levels of progress on updating each of these components. The FMP amendment process allows the Council to consider updates to the SRFC management framework as a whole package, analyzing economic and environmental tradeoffs of different management strategy alternatives while providing clear onramps for scientific review and public input. However, it is the perspective of Council staff that S_{MSY} and F_{MSY} values are best considered “objective scientific determinations,” and it is possible that modifying these values will have a substantial impact on Pacific Coast salmon fisheries. The process for determining these values must therefore comply with procedural directives requiring the use of the best scientific information available (BSIA) and adhere to policies that mandate independent peer review. This is further described in Section II. The conservation objective and the harvest control rule are best considered subsequent Council policy decisions that stem from the specification of F_{MSY} and S_{MSY} . These policy decisions are thus based

on the scientific specification of F_{MSY} and S_{MSY} but take into account broader objectives, such as social and economic considerations.

The following table provides an overview of the information provided by the Sacramento River fall Chinook Workgroup (SRWG), Salmon Technical Team (STT), Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) on each component, Council guidance to date, and the current direction of work based on this guidance.

TABLE 1. F_{MSY} (The current F_{MSY} proxy value is 0.58)

<u>Information Received to Date</u> June 2024: The SRWG provided a report that described five potential ways to update the F_{MSY} value. The SSC recommended that <i>the currently used proxy value for F_{MSY} be updated using recent data from other Chinook stocks that are representative of the SRFC stock under current conditions</i>. November 2024: The SSC Salmon Subcommittee (SSC-SSC) and STT reviewed a methodology review topic recommended by the SRWG that proposed a method for updating the SRFC F_{MSY} value. Both the STT and SSC supported the method and updated proxy value (0.58). The STT supported <i>updating the F_{MSY} proxy value for SRFC from 0.78 to 0.58...beginning in 2025</i> and the SSC <i>endorsed the decision to use Klamath and Rogue Fall Chinook stocks for the new F_{MSY} proxy</i>. The SAS expressed concern that the decrease in the F_{MSY} proxy would negatively impact South of Falcon fisheries.	
<u>Council Guidance to Date</u> Based on the November 2024 methodology review results, the Council adopted the updated F_{MSY} proxy value of 0.58 for SRFC for use beginning with the 2025 ocean salmon fisheries preseason planning process. The updated proxy value is the mean of the F_{MSY} estimates for Klamath River fall Chinook and Rogue River fall Chinook. The Council acknowledged ongoing efforts to update the KRFC reference points and specified that the newly adopted F_{MSY} proxy should be revisited in 2028.	<u>Direction Headed and Questions for Council</u> The Salmon FMP will need to be amended to reflect the 2024 update. At this time, the Council is not set to revisit the F_{MSY} proxy value until 2028. If the FMP is amended in 2027 to incorporate the 2024 F_{MSY} update and any other changes to the SRFC management framework (as tentatively planned; see Attachment 2), but then the 2028 review results in another change to the F_{MSY} proxy, the FMP could quickly become outdated again, requiring another amendment. The Council could consider whether an earlier review of the F_{MSY} proxy value would be beneficial, to better align it with the proposed FMP amendment timeline. Additional information on this topic is provided in Section III.

TABLE 2. S_{MSY} (The current S_{MSY} value is 122,000 total adult spawners)

Information Received to Date

June 2024:

The SRWG provided a [report](#) that described ten potential ways to update the S_{MSY} value.

The [STT](#) noted that in [Section 4.2.3](#) the *Workgroup noted logical inconsistencies in estimating F_{MSY} and S_{MSY} from a stock-recruitment relationship where the natural-origin spawners are not the only source of natural area production... However, the escapement that results in Maximum Sustainable Production (MSP) can be estimated under this scenario.*

The STT noted it *is supportive of identifying a reasonable ratio between S_{MSY} and S_{MSP} to inform a data-based estimate of S_{MSY} . The STT is less supportive of development of a proxy based on escapement maximizing production* and recommended *refocusing on management measures that are based on MSY but take into account other factors to achieve OY [to be] consistent with the National Standard 1 guidelines.*

The [SSC](#) recommended *the S_{MSY} , F_{MSY} , conservation objective, and other reference points for SRFC be developed for natural-origin fish only. In the interim, some updates can be completed in a short period of time. The SSC also recommends that S_{MSY} and the CO [conservation objective] be updated using one of the indirect approaches proposed by the WG.*

The [STT](#) recommended *caution if considerations are given to SRFC fishery management goals that are in terms of natural-origin fish... noting they are not aware of other management strategies that consist of objectives based on natural-origin fish only, where the composite stock is comprised of a large percentage of hatchery-origin fish.*

November 2024:

The SRWG's methodology review topic for determining an updated F_{MSY} proxy (described in Table 1) also included a [proposed method](#) for an **indirect approach for deriving an S_{MSY} value**, *wherein the “typical” ratio between S_{MSY} (the escapement corresponding to maximum sustainable yield) and S_{MP} (the escapement maximizing production) could be identified through a review of spawner-recruit relationships from other stocks. This ratio might be the basis of extrapolating S_{MSY} for SRFC from an estimate of S_{MP} ...noting that the available data for SRFC might allow for estimation of S_{MP} but do not allow for estimating S_{MSY} directly.*

The [SRWG's progress report](#) noted that *S_{MSY} should be based on a spawner-recruit analysis where spawners are adult SRFC spawning in natural areas, and recruits are some metric of natural-origin production. This does not necessarily mean that S_{MSY} would be expressed in units of natural-area spawners, but the SRWG did not think it was defensible to fit a single spawner-recruit relationship for spawners in both hatcheries and natural areas combined.*

TABLE 2 (continued). S_{MSY} (The current S_{MSY} value is 122,000 total adult spawners)

The SRWG agreed with STT and SSC statements <i>that developing natural-origin objectives could not be accomplished in the short term based on available data, and thus will focus on natural-area escapement for spawner-recruit analyses in the near term.</i> The SSC acknowledged available data for SRFC limit the ability to identify spawners of natural-origin and therefore <i>the SSC supports the SRWG proposals to measure S_{MSY} in terms of natural-area spawners.</i> The SRWG, STT, and SSC all noted in their November 2024 reports that switching to an S_{MSY} based on natural-area spawners could pose challenges for pre-season planning models and the control rule that are currently designed around total escapement.	
<u>Council Guidance to Date</u>	<u>Direction Headed and Questions for Council</u>
In June 2024, the Council specified that future work should reflect that MSY (and not MSP) serve as the basis of salmon fishery management, referencing the STT’s June report. In November 2024, the Council directed the SRWG to use the ‘typical’ ratio between S_{MSY} and S_{MP} and the newly adopted F_{MSY} value of 0.58 to derive an updated S_{MSY} value. The Council also requested options of an S_{MSY} based on natural-area spawners.	The SRWG has identified four approaches for determining the S_{MP} (since direct estimation of S_{MSY} may not be appropriate due to the large contribution of hatchery-origin spawners in natural areas), with one preferred approach. Once S_{MP} is determined, it will then be used to calculate the S_{MSY} using the ‘typical’ ratio that was described in the November 2024 methodology review topic ($S_{MSY} = F_{MSY} \times S_{MP}$). The SRWG will be providing documentation on all four approaches in its November report. S_{MSY} (and F_{MSY}) are objective scientific values. The Council should establish a clear process to ensure compliance with directives requiring the use of the BSIA and adherence to peer review policies when updating these values. This is further discussed in Section II. At a future meeting, the Council could provide clear guidance on if the scope of any future evaluations and peer review should be focused only on determining an S_{MSY} in terms of natural-area spawners and derived using the ratio approach (in line with Council guidance to date), or if other methods for defining S_{MSY} (such as total escapement) should also be considered given the potential implementation challenges previously raised by the STT, SSC, and SRWG.

TABLE 3. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE (The current conservation objective is 122,000 – 180,000 adult (age-3+) spawners in natural areas and hatcheries combined, throughout the Sacramento basin, regardless of origin)

<u>Information Received to Date</u>
June 2024: The SRWG report stated any approach used to update the S_{MSY} value could be used to update the conservation objective. The SSC recommended <i>the S_{MSY}, F_{MSY}, conservation objective, and other reference points for SRFC be developed for natural-origin fish only. In the interim, some updates can be completed in a short period of time.</i> The STT recommended <i>caution if considerations are given to SRFC fishery management goals that are in terms of natural-origin fish. We are not aware of other management strategies that consist of objectives based on natural-origin fish only, where the composite stock is comprised of a large percentage of hatchery-origin fish. Furthermore, implementation of a natural-origin fish conservation objective could be difficult for SRFC in the absence of mass marking.</i> November 2024: The SRWG provided a report, which noted <i>the importance of ensuring adequate broodstock at hatcheries and that in-river harvest is a function of total river run size, not just natural-area river run size. Consequently, the SRWG also discussed ideas for setting a conservation objective based on a total (natural and hatchery area combined) escapement that would be expected to have a high probability of yielding a natural-area escapement at least as high as S_{MSY}, provide for the other ecological and evolutionary considerations highlighted in National Standard 1, ensure adequate broodstock for hatcheries, and provide for quality inland recreational fishing opportunities.</i> September 2025: The SAS requested that <i>the Council should consider adaptive approaches to managing this stock, rather than just managing to a single value. For example, the current conservation objective uses a range, which allows for some flexibility.</i>

TABLE 3 (continued). CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE (The current conservation objective is 122,000 – 180,000 adult (age-3+) spawners in natural areas and hatcheries combined, throughout the Sacramento basin, regardless of origin)

<u>Council Guidance to Date</u>	<u>Direction Headed and Questions for Council</u>
In November 2024, the Council requested the SRWG develop options for a conservation objective based on total escapement (natural and hatchery areas combined).	The workgroup proposed a topic for the 2025 salmon methodology review that describes a method for establishing a total escapement objective (conservation objective) that includes both the S_{MSY} in terms of natural-area spawners and hatchery escapement needs, while also incorporating a Council-specified level of risk tolerance. If the Council has additional considerations or guidance regarding the conservation objective, it could express that at this or a future meeting. Any additional direction that can be provided before September would be taken into consideration during the development of the scoping document. Note that if the conservation objective is updated to be in terms of total escapement (natural-area and hatchery combined) and the S_{MSY} value is updated to be in terms of natural-area spawners <i>only</i>, they would no longer be quantified using the same units.

TABLE 4. HARVEST CONTROL RULE (The current HCR is structured around the F_{ABC} ($0.90 \cdot F_{MSY}$), $MSST$, S_{MSY} , and has two levels of *de minimis* exploitation rates)

June 2024: The SRWG provided a report that described different approaches for updating the harvest control rule. November 2024: In the November 2024 SRWG report, they noted <i>the clearest path toward deriving S_{MSY} would be a spawner-recruit analysis based on natural-area spawners, resulting in different units for S_{MSY} than are used by the current forecasting and harvest modeling tools. In addition, the SRWG identified several reasons why the conservation objective and thus desired escapement should likely be higher than S_{MSY}, and include consideration of escapement to both natural areas and hatcheries. Therefore, the SRWG recommends re-parameterizing the control rule in terms of the conservation objective rather than S_{MSY}.</i> The STT noted the <i>SRWG notes that the use of a conservation objective based on total escapement in place of an S_{MSY} based on natural-area spawners could pose challenges for preseason planning models.</i> The STT pointed out that <i>while the Sacramento Harvest Model does not currently have a module that projects escapement to natural areas only, the Klamath Ocean Harvest Model (KOHM) has this capability, and the method used for Klamath River fall Chinook could be modified for use with SRFC.</i>	
<u>Council Guidance to Date</u> In November 2024, the Council recognized that the reference points and conservation updates being developed by the SRWG may not align with the current harvest control rule. The Council directed the SRWG to work on modifying the harvest control rule should account for these potential updates.	<u>Direction Headed and Questions for Council</u> To date, the SRWG has prioritized developing reference points and the conservation objective over refining the HCR. A discussion of options and considerations for developing HCR alternatives will be included in the September scoping document. The Council could provide guidance on if future HCR alternatives options should be parameterized (1) in terms of the S_{MSY} (as is currently the case), (2) in terms of the conservation objective (as recommended by the SRWG), or (3) if the Council would like to consider options for both¹.

¹ Evaluating other options for the harvest control rules could mirror what was done when options for the Sacramento River Winter Chinook (SRWC) HCR were being evaluated. For that amendment, the SRWC Workgroup [initially provided the Council with nine options](#), which, with Council guidance, were modified and reduced down to [four options](#) by the time the Council was considering their final preferred alternative.)

TABLE 4 (continued). HARVEST CONTROL RULE (The current HCR is structured around the F_{ABC} ($0.90 \cdot F_{MSY}$), $MSST$, S_{MSY} , and has two levels of *de minimis* exploitation rates)

	As noted by the SRWG in November 2024, a HCR based on the conservation objective would target an escapement level above S_{MSY}. Although the current harvest control rule is parameterized in terms of S_{MSY}, if the units of S_{MSY} are changed from being in terms of total escapement to being in terms of only natural-area spawners, it would not be appropriate to directly plug that new S_{MSY} value into the current harvest control rule. The change in units would necessitate a re-evaluation of the breakpoints and curved and sloped sections of the current HCR. This evaluation could also be necessary if it is reparametrized in terms of the conservation objective. There will likely be implementation considerations to account for if there is a change in how the S_{MSY} and/or conservation objective are expressed.
--	---

II. Scientific Peer Review Process

How does the Council intend to ensure that the objective scientific components in this FMP amendment package comply with procedural directives requiring the use of the best scientific information available and adhere to policies mandating independent peer review?

Certain aspects of this FMP Amendment are best considered objective scientific decisions. These decisions can underpin other elements of the FMP Amendment package. One such aspect is the derivation of S_{MSY} , which is the number of spawners necessary to produce maximum sustained yield over time. From S_{MSY} , policies can be added which include other management factors that lead to a broader escapement objective, such as in-river harvest opportunities and other considerations. However, these other factors are best considered additive to S_{MSY} rather than incorporated within it. Similar to other forms of MSY , S_{MSY} is best considered an objective scientific measurement that maps onto National Standards (NS) 1 and 2 of the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA).

While the SSC makes determinations regarding best scientific information available, the Council has a role in helping ensure the development and quality of that information. One such role is in the development of processes and procedures that are considered “peer review”. In other words, fishery management councils don’t merely receive science; Councils help shape the credibility and transparency of science used in management through the development of such processes.

Several sections of the MSA, as well as NOAA and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Policies, are helpful in outlining what is necessary for a peer review process. These include:

- [OMB Peer Review Bulletin \(2004, M-05-03\)](#): The Bulletin requires peer review for influential assessments (such as stock assessments). In addition, this Bulletin requires agencies to: publish peer review agendas; make reports public; and explain how peer review was conducted. It also requires independent, expert peer review, with clear separation from those who conducted the work.
- [West Coast Best Scientific Information Available Regional Framework](#): The Regional BSIA Framework outlines the process for ensuring that management decisions are based on BSIA and is deemed to satisfy the requirements of the OMB Peer Review Bulletin. The Regional Framework describes that peer review may differ by assessment type or species group. Peer review may be conducted by the SSC alone, or with relevant FMP subcommittees and Center for Independent Expert panelists serving as part of peer review panels.
- [NOAA Administrative Order 216-105B \(2017\)](#): This policy implements the above OMB requirements within NOAA and does so by: requiring independent peer review for scientific products that inform management; establishing standards for objectivity, transparency, and timeliness; and directs line offices (like NMFS) to develop peer review procedures tailored to their fields.
- [MSA National Standard 2 Guidelines \(50 C.F.R. § 600.315\)](#): NS 2 guidelines reinforce that FMPs and their amendments must be based on BSIA. In doing so it clarifies that peer

review is a part of identifying BSIA and recognizes SSCs and approved peer review processes as the vehicles for doing so.

Together, the above policies and statutes mean that Councils don't run their own peer review independently; instead, Councils coordinate with NMFS to ensure reviews meet NOAA/OMB standards. In practical terms, this means that SSCs are the statutory peer review bodies, but when assessments or other scientific works are "highly influential," independent external review must occur. Within PFMC, the groundfish Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel process is a good example of external peer review for highly influential assessments. This process satisfies OMB and NOAA requirements for transparency, independence, and scientific integrity.

One peer review process built into the annual salmon management framework is the annual Salmon Methodology Review. However, this process occurs on a short time scale, typically during the interim period between salmon preseason planning cycles, and is intended "*to provide peer review of the technical estimation and modeling procedures, to ensure the best and most objective technical analyses possible, to minimize confusion during the preseason option development process, and to resolve disputes over methodology*" ([Council Operating Procedure \(COP\) 15](#)). It is the perspective of Council staff that the design of the methodology review process is most appropriate for evaluating technical tools, model updates, or general model refinements that do not involve broader policy trade-offs or that do not constitute major changes in policy or management.

Council discussions around scientific aspects of the Sacramento fall Chinook FMP Amendment, such as the SMSY, have suggested that the Council and others are interested in the construction of a deliberate peer review process around any re-estimation of SMSY. Undoubtedly a new SMSY could carry with it "highly influential" policy and management implications and thus it would be appropriate for the Council, in consultation with NMFS, to create a rigorous, independent, transparent peer review process prior to any BSIA determination made by the SSC.

Council staff propose, for Council consideration, an expanded peer review approach for the re-estimation of SMSY. Recent experience has highlighted that certain topics requiring scientific review may demand more time, resources, or external expertise than the current salmon methodology review process can accommodate. Traditionally, methodology reviews typically occur over one to two days and are primarily intended to ensure the accuracy and functionality of models used in the preseason salmon planning process. As such, their outcomes are generally limited in scope and intended to support the upcoming preseason process. In other words, the design of the methodology review process may not be well suited to satisfy peer review requirements of highly influential scientific works, such as the derivation of SMSY of SRFC.

In contrast, peer review processes such as those proposed below could be designed to allow for a more in-depth, external evaluation. Due to the government shutdown, Council staff have not yet had the opportunity to consult with NMFS partners and NOAA General Counsel, but it is of the understanding of Council staff that these expanded reviews developed in consultation with NMFS would not require immediate implementation of their outcomes. Rather, the outcomes of the review would serve as a critical component of the broader FMP amendment process. The results would help inform and guide the development of the remaining elements of the amendment.

Potential approaches to the peer review process include, but are not limited to:

1. **Basic peer review:** The peer review body would be presented with the analysis developed by the SRWG, along with any additional methods explored prior to the review. The review panel would evaluate the scientific merit of the proposed approaches and provide independent recommendations. The panel's role would primarily be to receive information and offer advisory feedback based on their expertise.
2. **Interactive review with iterations:** The peer review body would be presented with the analysis developed by the SRWG and actively engage in sensitivity analyses and iterative discussions with the SRWG throughout the review process. The peer review panel's recommendations would be shaped by this iterative exchange.
3. **Review with additional analysis:** The peer review body would be presented with the analysis developed by the SRWG and evaluate their scientific basis. If applicable, the panel would conduct additional analysis using their own experience and expertise to develop their recommendation.

The general membership of the peer review panel could include one designated chair, members from the SSC-SSC, and additional qualified external experts. External participants may include representatives from the Center for Independent Experts (CIE), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and/or relevant academic institutions. The SRWG would be responsible for preparing materials for the review. The STT would provide additional technical expertise during the review process. Members of the SAS would participate in an advisory capacity, and public comment would be solicited as part of the peer review proceedings.

The SSC would review the peer review panel's final report and incorporate its findings when formulating BSIA recommendations. Terms of Reference for the peer review would be developed by Council staff, in consultation with NMFS to ensure consistency with applicable policies. The SSC would provide input and review on the TORs prior to Council adoption.

Council staff will use any direction the Council provides at this meeting to work collaboratively with NMFS to develop a peer review process and corresponding Terms of Reference (TORs), with input and review from the SSC, for further Council consideration in March 2026.

III. Additional Considerations

Within the FMP Amendment Process: F_{MSY} Proxy Review

Similar to the S_{MSY} , the F_{MSY} (fishing mortality rate that results in MSY over the long term) value is determined through objective scientific methods.

In November 2024, the Council [adopted an updated \$F_{MSY}\$ value](#) using a [method](#) proposed by the SRWG and reviewed via the Salmon Methodology Review. The paper also proposed a method for deriving the S_{MSY} value based on a typical ratio between F_{MSY} , S_{MSY} and S_{MP} (the escapement that maximizes production), where $F_{MSY} = S_{MSY}/S_{MP}$ (and therefore $S_{MSY} = F_{MSY} * S_{MP}$).

The updated F_{MSY} proxy value of 0.58 (from 0.78), which is based on the average of F_{MSY} estimates for Klamath River fall Chinook (KRFC) and Rogue River fall Chinook, was endorsed by both the

[SSC](#) and [STT](#). When the Council adopted this approach, it acknowledged ongoing efforts to update the KRFC reference points and agreed that the F_{MSY} proxy should be revisited in 2028.

The 2025 salmon preseason documents reflect the updated F_{MSY} value, and it is currently being used in management. However, the Salmon FMP has not yet been updated, but it would be as a part of this amendment process. If the FMP is amended in 2027 to incorporate the 2024 F_{MSY} update and any other changes to the SRFC management framework identified through this FMP amendment process (as tentatively planned; see Attachment 2), but then the 2028 review results in another change to the F_{MSY} , the FMP could quickly become outdated once again. **Therefore, the Council may want to consider reviewing the F_{MSY} proxy prior to 2028.**

If so, the Council should decide if this topic should be included in a future expanded peer review, such as the one proposed for evaluating the updated S_{MSY} value.

Outside of the FMP Amendment Process: Forecast and Harvest Models

The Sacramento Index (SI) is the annually forecasted value that serves as both the index of adult (age-3) ocean abundance at the start of the fishing season and also the potential adult escapement in the absence of fishing. It is an aggregate estimate of both hatchery and natural area spawners. The Sacramento Harvest Model (SHM) uses the SI for evaluating different fishery season scenarios to determine projected harvest and total (natural and hatchery area) escapement.

Both the [SSC](#) and [STT](#) have noted that since the current control rule, S_{MSY} , and harvest planning models are currently based around total (natural plus hatchery) escapement for SRFC, moving to an S_{MSY} in terms of natural-area spawners would pose challenges for preseason planning models. Updates to the SI and SHM would need to occur tangentially to, but outside of, the FMP amendment process.

While a cohort reconstruction, which back-calculates abundance by age class over time, could help address this issue and the Council approved the use of a SRFC cohort reconstruction in [November 2024](#), it is not currently ready for use in management due to the limited number of years available and current data processing capacity. As noted in the [November 2024 CDFW report](#):

Incorporating the cohort reconstruction into the Council's annual management cycle will require substantial changes to existing data flows, increased commitments from partner agencies, and assignment of new responsibilities within CDFW to develop and maintain new data systems and data streams needed to allow for annual updating of the cohort reconstruction.

Once a sufficient time series is available and data processing capacity can support its annual use, the outputs of the cohort reconstruction could be used in a simple abundance forecast method (which would replace the current SI forecast). Although moving to an updated forecast model would require a methodology review, the updated approach would likely be similar to what is already in use for KRFC (see [November 2024 STT report](#)).

Until the cohort reconstruction is ready for use in annual management, if the S_{MSY} value is updated to be in terms of natural-area spawners, adjustments to the SI and SHM will be necessary which may take considerable time and resources. Close coordination with the STT

will be essential to assess the feasibility and timing of these changes, and to ensure that any implementation challenges are identified and addressed early in the process.

IV. Skillsets and Expertise for Developing the FMP Amendment

Developing a holistic SRFC FMP Amendment will likely require a multidisciplinary SRFC FMP Amendment Workgroup (Sac FMP WG) with a diverse set of expertise. Council staff have developed a draft purpose and charge for this group, for Council consideration:

The Sacramento River fall Chinook Fishery Management Plan Amendment Workgroup (Sac FMP WG) will assist the Council in the development of an FMP amendment for updating the Sacramento River fall Chinook management framework (reference points, conservation objective, and harvest control rule). The Sac FMP WG will develop alternative management frameworks for Council consideration, taking into account the best scientific information available and Council guidance. The Sac FMP WG will provide a wholistic analysis of how updated reference points fit into alternatives for the conservation objective and harvest control rule and provide an analysis of anticipated impacts on the human environment, including fishery and biologic impacts, associated with the various options.

This team should consist of no more than 12 members to ensure it can function effectively. Key areas of knowledge and expertise that should be represented include:

- Policy representation from NOAA's West Coast Regional Office and from both the California and Oregon Departments of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW and ODFW) (3-4)
- Expertise in social and economic analysis (1)
- Proficiency with current California salmon modeling tools (1-2)
- Experience with developing and assessing fishery harvest control rules (1)
- Industry experience and on-the-water knowledge (1-2)
- Familiarity with land and water management in the Sacramento River Basin (1)
- Strong scientific background in Sacramento River salmon ecology and population dynamics (1)

V. Continued Role of the Current Sacramento River fall Chinook Workgroup

The current Sacramento River Workgroup is composed of the following members:

- One representative from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center
- One representative from the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (*seat will be vacant after December 2025*)
- One representative from the West Coast Regional Office
- Two representatives from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- One representative from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- One representative from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (*currently vacant*)

To date, the SRWG has developed reports for the Council that are highly technical and scientifically rigorous. These reports have provided critical summaries of the current management framework for SRFC and have outlined alternative approaches, with a focus on biological reference points and conservation objectives.

The SRWG could continue its role in supporting the development of technical analyses, particularly for any topics to be evaluated via the peer review process and would be further tasked with presenting analysis to peer review bodies. As the effort to revise the conservation objective and harvest control rules advances, the broader Sac FMP WG (which could include current SRWG members) would take the lead in developing and evaluating policy alternatives.

VI. Summary and Key Questions

A tentative timeline for developing the SRFC management framework FMP amendment is outlined in Agenda Item G.4 Attachment 2. Work on the September 2026 scoping document will begin after the conclusion of the salmon preseason process and will continue based on the Council guidance to date and the current direction of work, and any additional direction or tasking the Council provides before then.

At this meeting, the Council should be prepared to address the following questions to aid in near-term planning:

- Does the Council wish to begin the FMP amendment process and approve the tentative timeline, as outlined in Attachment 2?
- Does the Council endorse the formation of a SRFC FMP Amendment Workgroup and preliminarily adopt the draft purpose and charge provided in Section IV?
- What feedback does the Council have on the development of an independent peer review process and the scope and objectives for such a review, as discussed in Section II?

PFGC

10/22/25