

VI. MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Unanticipated Impacts of Inside Area Fisheries - Buoy 10

Preseason impact assessment for chinook and coho in 1986 included estimates of ocean and inside area fishery harvests and other sources of mortality, on a stock by stock basis. Such a comprehensive examination is essential for assessing achievement of the Council's stock specific escapement goals.

For example, a total impact assessment was made for depressed Washington coastal fall natural coho stocks that were critical to the Council's regulatory package. The SPDT prepared a comprehensive impact statement based upon an assessment of all fisheries that were known to affect the ocean escapements of these critical stocks. The SPDT's assessment relied upon quotas established by the Council for ocean fisheries, a 67,000 coho quota for the Buoy 10 recreational fishery, and harvest rates and levels based upon recent historic averages for all other fisheries. The SPDT worked closely with Columbia River fishery management entities in developing a reasonable and consistent method for assessing Buoy 10 recreational fishery impacts, utilizing coded-wire tag recovery information from 1984 and 1985 seasons. For comprehensive planning for the Council, the SPDT was given clear direction to include a maximum total harvest of 67,000 coho by this fishery.

Following completion of the Council impact analysis in April, state management agency and Columbia River treaty tribal technical staffs reported agreement regarding management of this fishery which contradicted the direction given to the SPDT. The inside technical group concluded (Joint Staff Report, May 8, 1986) that the quota of 67,000 coho for Buoy 10 should only apply to the period prior to September 6, claiming that harvest impact to non-Columbia River origin stocks beginning September 6, was "negligible." The technical group's assertion is not supported by available information. Data for the Buoy 10 fishery presented in Table VI-1 of the "1985 Review of Ocean Salmon Fisheries" indicates that in 1985 the highest percentage and greatest impact on non-Columbia River stocks occurred after the first week in September.

Following attainment of the 67,000 coho quota harvest in late August, the Buoy 10 recreational fishery was reopened in September without coho harvest limits. As a result, the actual catch by this fishery was nearly double the preseason expectation. The SPDT is concerned that the lack of consistency in the regulation of inside fisheries which border ocean management areas compromises the validity of the SPDT's preseason impact analysis and the premises upon which agreements may be negotiated between other management entities.

Increasing Catch Trends in the Straits of Juan de Fuca Troll and Sport Fisheries

Chinook and coho catches by hook-and-line fisheries in the Straits of Juan de Fuca immediately to the east of Area 4B have increased in recent years. The increase has been most dramatic for treaty Indian troll fisheries but is also evident for sport fisheries. The treaty troll chinook harvest in Areas 5 and 6C has more than doubled annually since 1982; the 1986 catch of 23,600 chinook was nearly twice the size of the quota established for the entire treaty troll fishery in ocean management areas. The treaty troll catch for these areas for January 1987 was significantly greater than catches for this same month in

previous years. The coho catch has demonstrated a similar trend, but the size of the catch is much smaller; the 1986 coho catch by this fishery of 4,700, was more than five times the previous record high observed in 1985. The 1985 recreational catches of 18,400 chinook and 72,100 coho in Area 5 were above the previous five-year average (catch estimates for 1986 are not yet available) by 23 percent and 110 percent, respectively.

Coded-wire tag data from the 1985 sport fishery in Areas 4B and 5 indicate that there was no significant difference in coho stock composition between these areas. Available GSI data suggest that the contribution of Columbia River fall stocks to Area 5 and 6C fisheries is approximately one half that to Area 4 and 4B fisheries.

The SPDT is concerned that the lack of direct controls on fisheries in these areas increases the difficulty of assessing impacts of ocean regulations upon stocks that are critical to the deliberations of the Council.

Complexity of the 1986 Regulations

The Council has adopted increasingly complex regulations and managers and users have sought to maximize harvest opportunity for stocks with harvestable surpluses while providing some level of protection for depressed stocks. Examples include: smaller subarea management, initiation of near-terminal ocean fisheries, ratio fisheries, and small quota levels. While the pursuit of these types of regulations may enhance economic and social benefits, available data often do not support the level of detail that is necessary to realistically evaluate some of these management measures, given the uncertainty inherent in stock behavior and fishing patterns. The SPDT is concerned that management measures are becoming so complex that assessment will become more subjective and lack sound scientific foundation. As the complexity of regulations increases, the SPDT's ability to accurately project the impacts of these regulations diminishes.

