

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT

Salmon Overfishing Reports

The Habitat Committee (HC) drafted a review regarding the Western Strait of Juan de Fuca (WSJF) Coho Habitat which is in the briefing book (Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 2). This review summarizes the factors likely to have influenced the failure of this stock to meet escapement goals for the years 2005, 2006, and 2007. Key findings of the review include: adverse ocean conditions, significant floods and suboptimal base flows in the affected brood years, and suspended solid concentrations that inhibit foraging success.

The draft HC recommendations from this review are:

- 1. Support efforts of the WDFW to improve hydraulic project approval (HPA), program specifically the need for increased effectiveness and compliance monitoring of issued permits.**
- 2. Support achievement of Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) Clean Water Act (CWA) Review milestones related to State of Washington Forest Practice program.**
- 3. Support future restoration efforts in the WSJF that address limiting factors of coho salmon.**

Sacramento Fall Chinook Overfishing Review

Members of the Habitat Committee and Salmon Technical Team met to discuss and coordinate the preparation of the Sacramento River fall Chinook overfishing report. The group:

- reviewed the list of data used in the Lindley et al. collapse report of 2009 to evaluate which data sets to update for the new report and assigned responsibilities for data updates;
- decided to use the existing format of Lindley et al. for the new report; and
- set a timeline for tasks, discussed holding a meeting in California for late summer, and will provide a status report to the Council at the November meeting.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently conducting a review of hatchery release strategies at Coleman National Fish Hatchery that will be available to inform this new report.

Coho Salmon Population Trends-- Mid-Klamath Basin

The HC heard a presentation by Morgan Knechtle with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), regarding population trends of Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Coho (SONCC). SONCC coho are currently listed as a threatened species under both Federal and State authorities. The CDFG has operated video fish counting facilities on the Shasta River and Scott River watersheds, both mid Klamath basin tributaries, since 2001 and 2007 respectively to enumerate abundance and describe run characteristics.

CDFG reported that two of three SONCC cohorts in the Scott River are critically low while a general decline was noted in all three cohorts of Shasta River SONCC. In fact, two of three cohorts in the Shasta River are functionally extinct. Both the Scott River and Shasta River coho salmon populations are identified in the SONCC Recovery Plan as independent core populations, which indicate their high level of importance to the long term success in the evolutionarily significant unit.

The HC recommends the Council write a letter to California Department of Water Resources, CDFG and National Marine Fisheries Service stressing the urgent need to provide adequate water quantity and quality for survival of these stocks under eminent threat of extinction. Additionally we recommend consideration be given to establishing a conservation hatchery\captive broodstock program to preserve the genetic integrity of these populations.

Wave Energy

The HC drafted a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for the Ocean Power Technology (OPT) wave energy project for Council review (Agenda Item D.1.a, Attachment 1). This project located off Reedsport, Oregon will cover approximately 30 acres and will be located about 2.5 miles off the coast in waters from 50' to 225' in depth.

OPT's project application to FERC includes two phases. Phase I will occur this summer, which involves the installation of one buoy and its associated moorings. Phase II will occur during summer 2011, and involves installing an additional 9 buoys connecting the 10-bouy array to the power grid. Phase III will be covered under a future permit application and is being proposed as a 100-buoy array.

As this is to be the first offshore wave energy project in US waters, it may very well establish a precedent for other proposed U.S. offshore energy projects, including the other 19 hydrokinetic projects pending off Washington, Oregon, and California. The HC feels the standards of FERC's review and scrutiny of future wave energy applications will likely be influenced by this application.

The Council's letter should be filed in response to FERC's Ready for Environmental Analysis (REA) notice which was issued June 1 for a 90 day comment period. This REA notice informs the public that FERC deems the application adequate for preparation of a National Environmental Policy Act document. In light of the Settlement Agreement process, FERC is planning to issue an Environmental Assessment, not an Environmental Impact Statement. Although there is a 60-day public comment period once the environmental assessment is released, it is appropriate for the Council to comment at this time, as earlier comments will more likely influence the process.

Regarding other wave energy developments, the State of California and FERC have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to assure communication and coordination of wave energy siting and reviews. An updated list of wave energy proposals is on the Council's website. The HC recommends that the Council approve the letter.

PFMC
06/12/10