

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF
UNDERSTANDING FOR THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY BIRDS

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) would like to provide comments regarding the Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Conservation of Migratory Birds. The SAS believes that bird interaction with the gear of the different user groups we represent is already at a minimum and that these user groups have committed to maintain minimum interactions with seabirds. While supportive of the draft MOU in general, the SAS would like to point out that there are times when bird populations may pose a conservation issue on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed salmonids, a situation that currently exists on the Columbia River. In 2009, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers made a presentation to the SAS regarding predation by Caspian terns and Double-crested Cormorants on out-migrating salmon smolts. The most recent data at that time indicated predation of 23 million smolts per year, including substantial numbers of listed salmonids. More recent data indicates that predation has increased to approximately 27 million smolts per year. Caspian Terns are not native to the Columbia River, and the population of Double-crested cormorants has increased significantly beyond historical levels in recent years.

The SAS is aware of studies being done on this issue and is supportive of these studies. However, SAS members want to ensure that their concerns of the gravity of this situation be made part of the record. The potential conflicts in managing bird and fish populations under circumstances such as exist currently on the Columbia River need to be addressed, and it would be timely to ensure that conservation issues with listed fish, as well as with birds, be noted in the MOU to ensure that these issues be recognized and addressed.

PFMC
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