



Pacific Fishery Management Council *NEWS RELEASE*

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PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL RELEASES FORECASTS FOR 2010

SALMON ABUNDANCE

Portland, OR – Pacific Fishery Management Council scientists have reviewed 2009 returns and have prepared a forecast of 2010 salmon abundance for use in setting ocean salmon fishing seasons this summer. The Council will discuss the forecasts at their upcoming meeting March 6-11 in Sacramento, California. “The forecast for Sacramento River fall Chinook will undoubtedly draw the most attention, given the extensive fishing closures the past two years to protect this valuable run of fish,” said Council Chairman David Ortmann. “It is important for everyone to recognize that at our Sacramento meeting, we will be preparing three fishing season options for further analysis and public review, and won’t make a final decision until the April 10 – 15 meeting in Portland, Oregon.”

While the returns of Sacramento River fall Chinook in 2009 fell far below expectations and represented the third consecutive year of shortfall from the conservation goal, the forecast for 2010 is for a higher level abundance, sufficient to support some level of ocean fishing opportunity.

The Council has released two comprehensive informational reports, available now on the Council's website. The first, [Review of 2009 Ocean Salmon Fisheries](#)¹, includes data on 2009 salmon returns, including spawning escapements. Spawning escapement is the number of fish returning to spawn after harvest and other removals from the population. Escapement numbers in one year do not necessarily predict escapement numbers the next year, since salmon juveniles enter the ocean several years before returning to the streams of their birth; however, the return of jack² salmon in one year are used to forecast abundance the next year's return. The second report ([Stock Abundance Analysis for 2010 Ocean Salmon Fisheries](#)³), details the various forecasts for West Coast salmon stocks.

2009 Spawning Escapements

South of Cape Falcon

Fisheries South of Cape Falcon (near Nehalem in northern Oregon) are supported primarily by **Sacramento River fall Chinook**. In 2008 and 2009, poor Sacramento returns led to the largest fishery closure on record. In 2009, adult spawning escapement for Sacramento River fall Chinook was dismally low – only 39,500 adult salmon returned, compared to the escapement goal⁴ of 122,000 adults, which was the management target in 2009. That marks the third consecutive year the escapement goal has not been met, which will lead to the formal declaration of an overfishing concern.

¹ <http://www.pcouncil.org/salmon/stock-assessment-and-fishery-evaluation-safe-documents/review-of-2009-ocean-salmon-fisheries/>

² Jacks are immature fish that return to the rivers at age two (unlike adult fish, which return at age three or greater).

³ <http://www.pcouncil.org/salmon/stock-assessment-and-fishery-evaluation-safe-documents/preseason-reports/2010-preseason-report-i/>

⁴ The Sacramento River fall Chinook escapement goal, or conservation objective (122,000-180,000 adult fish) is the estimated optimal number of adult fish returning to spawn in order to maximize the production of the stock.

In contrast, the count of jacks in the Sacramento River fall Chinook return this past fall was 9,200, a significant increase compared to the return of 4,000 jacks in 2008 and 1,900 in 2007. However, it is important to note that the long-term average return of jacks is about 40,000.

Klamath River returns included 44,600 adults spawning in natural areas, which is above the 35,000 minimum conservation objective and the 2009 rebuilding management objective of 40,700.

Oregon coastal coho returns included about 235,500 natural spawners, the second highest in recent years.

North of Cape Falcon

Columbia River fall Chinook returns in 2009 were mostly above average, although the North Lewis River wild return was slightly less than the management objective of 5,700 adults. Jack returns for most Columbia River stocks were above average, including a record high for the Spring Creek Hatchery stock, which supports fisheries off Washington and northern Oregon.

Columbia River hatchery coho returning to the river mouth were the highest since 2001. However, jack returns were substantially lower in 2009.

2010 Salmon Abundance Estimates

South of Cape Falcon

The forecast for the Sacramento Index of ocean abundance (**Sacramento River fall Chinook**) in 2010 is 245,500 adults, which should provide adequate spawning

escapement to meet management objectives and provide some fishing opportunity.

The **Klamath River fall Chinook** forecast for 2010 is for a total ocean abundance of 331,500 adults, which should provide adequate spawning escapement to meet the management objectives and provide some fishing opportunity.

The **Oregon Coast natural coho** forecast in 2010 is for an ocean abundance of about 148,000 adults, which is 70 percent of last year's forecast, but still above the 15 year average.

North of Cape Falcon

The 2009 **Columbia River tule Chinook** forecast for spring Creek and lower river hatchery combined is 259,600, well above recent year forecasts. In contrast, the **hatchery coho** forecasts for the Columbia River are 245,300 early stock and 144,200 late stock, collectively about a third of the 2009 abundance level.

Based on these forecasts, there should be more Chinook opportunity but less coho opportunity in 2010 ocean fisheries north of Cape Falcon.

Background on Sacramento River Fall Chinook

The Sacramento River fall Chinook stock is the driver of commercial and recreational salmon fisheries off California and most of Oregon. As recently as 2002, 775,000 adults returned to spawn.

Most adult Sacramento River fall Chinook live to be about three years old, but some return as four year olds. They are anadromous, which means they hatch in rivers,

creeks, and hatcheries; migrate to the ocean for several years; and then return to the rivers of their birth to spawn once before dying. Sacramento fall Chinook of catchable age this year were spawned in 2006 and 2007 and migrated to the ocean in 2007-2008.

Causes for Sacramento Fall Chinook Decline

The reason for the collapse of the Sacramento fall Chinook stock is not readily apparent, although both natural and hatchery-produced fish have been affected. Many biologists believe a combination of human-caused and natural factors explain the bulk of the collapse, including freshwater factors such as in-stream water withdrawals, habitat alterations, dam operations, construction, pollution, and changes in hatchery operations, as well as below-average survival conditions in the marine environment.

Management Process

The Council will review the stock size projections and set harvest levels this spring. At its March 5-11 meeting in Sacramento, California, the Council will develop a range of management options. Salmon management discussions begin on March 8, when the Council will review 2009 salmon fisheries and discuss stock abundance estimates. The Council will tentatively adopt salmon management measures for analysis by the Council's Salmon Technical Team on March 8, and discussions will continue through March 10. On Thursday, March 11, the Council is scheduled to adopt management options for public review. These options will represent a range of possible fishing seasons.

Public hearings to receive input on the options are scheduled for March 29 in Westport, Washington and Coos Bay, Oregon; and for March 30 in Eureka, California. The Council

will consult with scientists, hear public comment, and revise preliminary decisions until it chooses a final option at its meeting during the week of April 10 in Portland, Oregon.

At its April meeting in Portland, the Council will narrow these options to a single season recommendation to be forwarded to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for their final approval by May 1.

All Council meetings are open to the public.

Council Role

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 for the purpose of managing fisheries 3-200 miles offshore of the United States of America coastline. The Pacific Council recommends management measures for fisheries off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington.

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For additional information:

- Geographic points used in salmon management: <http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/geosalmon.pdf>
- Common terms used in salmon management: http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/com_terms_salmon.pdf
- 2010 preseason process for salmon management: <http://www.pcouncil.org/salmon/current-season-management/salmon-2009-preseason-process-work-sessions-and-hearings/>