INTRODUCTION

This is the second report in an annual series of four reports prepared by the Salmon Technical Team (STT) of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to document and help guide salmon fishery management off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. This report will be formally reviewed at the Council's March meeting. The third and fourth reports in this series will be developed at the close of the March and April Council meetings, respectively. They will analyze the impacts of the Council's proposed and final ocean salmon fishery management recommendations for 2003. An environmental assessment will also be prepared to assist the Council and U.S. Secretary of Commerce in the decision process.

This report provides year 2003 salmon stock abundance projections and an analysis of the impacts of 2002 regulations, or regulatory procedures, on the projected 2003 abundance. The report focuses on chinook and coho stocks that have been important in determining Council fisheries in recent years and on stocks listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with established jeopardy standards.

Chapter I provides a summary of stock abundance projections. Chapters II and III provide detailed stock-by-stock analyses of abundance and a description of prediction methodology and accuracy of past abundance predictions for chinook and coho salmon, respectively. Chapter IV summarizes abundance information for pink salmon. Three appendices provide supplementary information as follows: Appendix A provides a summary of Council stock management goals; Appendix B contains pertinent data for Oregon production index (OPI) area coho; Appendix C contains the Council's current harvest allocation schedules.

The STT notes that differences between preseason and postseason estimates are caused by a number of factors, including, (1) inaccuracies in abundance forecasts for these and other stocks which are exploited in mixed stock fisheries, (2) deviations of actual catches and fishery patterns from preseason expectations, (3) anomalies in stock distribution and migration patterns, and (4) for the Puget Sound coho stocks, differences in assessment methodologies (postseason estimates are based on run reconstruction assumptions which differ substantially from those represented in the Fishery Regulatory Assessment Model [FRAM]).