

INTRODUCTION

The Salmon Technical Team (STT) and staff of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) have prepared this stock assessment and fishery evaluation (SAFE) document as a postseason review of the 2012 ocean salmon fisheries off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California to help assess Council salmon fishery management performance, the status of Council area salmon stocks, and the socioeconomic impacts of salmon fisheries. This postseason report will also provide a detailed description of the salmon fishery portions of the affected environment to be incorporated by reference into an Environmental Assessment (EA) to comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for the 2013 ocean salmon management measures. The STT and Council staff will provide three additional reports prior to the beginning of the ocean salmon season to help guide the Council's selection of annual fishery management measures: Preseason Report I, Preseason Report II, and Preseason Report III. These reports will provide forecasts of stock abundance, determine annual catch limits, and will analyze the biological and economic impacts of the Council's proposed alternatives and adopted fishery management recommendations. Preseason Report I will also constitute the first part of the EA for 2013 ocean salmon fishery management measures, and include a statement of the purpose and need, a description of the affected environment, and a description and analysis of the status quo (no action) alternative. Preseason Report II will constitute the second and final part of the EA, and will include a description and analysis of the alternative management measures considered for 2013 ocean salmon fisheries. The alternatives analyzed in Preseason Report II will provide a reasonable range of environmental effects, which will bound those of the final fishery management measures included in Preseason Report III. Together, these two parts of the EA will provide the necessary components to determine if a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is warranted.

West Coast fisheries in Council-managed waters (ocean fisheries between the U.S./Canada border and the U.S./Mexico border from 3 to 200 nautical miles offshore) are directed toward and harvest primarily Chinook or king salmon, *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*, and coho or silver salmon, *Oncorhynchus kisutch*. Small numbers of pink salmon, *Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*, also are harvested, especially in odd numbered years. There are no directed fisheries for other Pacific salmon species, which are rarely caught in Council-managed fisheries.

The Council's annual review of ocean salmon fisheries provides a summary of important biological and socioeconomic data from which to assess the status of managed stocks, impacts of past management actions, to determine how well management objectives are being met, and to improve regulations for the future. The Council will formally review this SAFE document at its March meeting prior to the development of management alternatives for the approaching fishing season.

Chapter I summarizes ocean salmon fishery regulations and landings within the Council management area and management actions and landings under the jurisdiction of the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC). Appendix A tables detail historical effort and harvest data by state and by management area. Appendix C summarizes historical ocean fishery regulations.

For Chinook and coho salmon, respectively, Chapters II and III assess, where possible, the achievement of pertinent management objectives by salmon stock (including those listed under the Endangered Species Act [ESA]), outline regulations used to achieve the objectives, and summarize inside fisheries catch and spawner escapement data. Appendix B tables detail historical spawning escapement and inside fisheries catch information. Detailed information for other salmon species is not included since Council fisheries have minor impacts on pink salmon escapements and no measurable impacts on sockeye or chum salmon or steelhead trout; however, catch and escapement data and objectives for Puget Sound pink salmon are summarized in Appendix B, Table B-43.

In 2011 the Council also adopted new status determination criteria (SDC) for overfishing, approaching an overfished condition, overfished, not overfished/rebuilding, and rebuilt under Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 16. These criteria, approved and implemented in December 2011, were:

- Overfishing occurs when a single year exploitation rate exceeds the maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT), which is based on the maximum sustainable yield exploitation rate (F_{MSY});
- Approaching an overfished condition occurs when the geometric mean of the two most recent postseason estimates of spawning escapement, and the current preseason forecast of spawning escapement, is less than the minimum stock size threshold (MSST);
- Overfished status occurs when the most recent 3-year geometric mean spawning escapement is less than the MSST;
- Not overfished/rebuilding status occurs when a stock has been classified as overfished and has not yet been rebuilt, and the most recent 3-year geometric mean spawning escapement is greater than the MSST but less than S_{MSY} ;
- A stock is rebuilt when the most recent 3-year geometric mean spawning escapement exceeds S_{MSY} .

All SDC rely on the most recent estimates available, which in some cases may be a year or more in the past because of incomplete broods or data availability. The above criteria for rebuilt status are the default criteria provided in the FMP; however, alternative criteria may be developed through a rebuilding plan if warranted by stock specific circumstances. Relevant stocks were evaluated relative to these new SDC as required by the FMP. In addition, new conservation objectives were adopted for some stocks based on revised estimates of S_{MSY} and F_{MSY} , which are the reference points used to establish stock-specific SDC. Stock specific reference points and recent year estimates for relevant stocks are presented in Tables II-6 and III-6.

Status determinations for overfishing, overfished, not overfished/rebuilding, and rebuilt are reported in this SAFE document; however, because approaching an overfished condition relies on a preseason forecast, that status determination is reported in Preseason Report I. In addition, some status determinations may be updated in Preseason Report I if more recent spawning escapement or exploitation rate estimates become available between the time this SAFE document and Preseason Report I are published.

Socioeconomic impacts of the fisheries are discussed in Chapter IV. Appendix D provides historical fishery-related socioeconomic data.

The annual review of ocean salmon fisheries is drafted as early as analyses of landings and escapement data are available. The most recent entries are noted as preliminary and later updated when the data become final. If updated information or error corrections that could substantially affect the development of management measures for the upcoming season are available, an errata sheet will be included as an appendix in one of the subsequent STT preseason planning documents.

COMMON TABLE CONVENTIONS

All 2012 data provided in this report are preliminary. The following conventions apply to all tables in this report:

1. Due to rounding, the total values may not equal the sum of individual values.
2. A single dash indicates there are no data appropriate for a particular table cell, or in the case of fishing effort or landings, that the season was closed.
3. A double dash indicates no records are available, for example, a fishery may not have been sampled due to low and sporadic effort.
4. "NA" indicates data are not available at the time of publication, but are likely to be available at a future date.

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