

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) adopted ocean salmon fishing regulations on April 16, 2015 for ocean waters from three to 200 miles off shore (federal jurisdiction). The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) will be asked to adopt matching permanent regulations for ocean waters from zero to three miles off shore (state jurisdiction).

Ocean salmon seasons adopted by the PFMC are structured to address conservation and Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements for various Chinook and coho stocks. Forecasts for the Klamath and Sacramento Chinook populations indicate a good return for 2015. Forecasts for other salmon stocks are similar to 2014. The overall forecast for Columbia River fall Chinook is for another large return of 900,000 fish.

The Department is also required by Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 635-500-0135 to adopt regulations for ocean mixed-stock and terminal area fisheries that meet three specific criteria: 1) provide access by fisheries to harvestable surpluses of Chinook salmon that may exist, 2) maintain traditional in-river fisheries in most coastal river basins, and 3) meet spawning escapement goals in wild coastal Chinook populations. These fisheries also cannot impact other regional depressed salmon stocks under PFMC or Oregon management plans.

Staff is proposing sport and commercial troll seasons in two traditional terminal areas for 2015: Elk River - off Port Orford, and Chetco River - off Brookings. These terminal fisheries are successful at harvesting stocks returning to these locations with little interception of other Chinook stocks.

The remaining items in the draft OARs are housekeeping updates to reflect current practices in the fisheries, including modification to language for reporting requirements on commercial troll receiving tickets to reflect federal rule.

ISSUE 1

OCEAN RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERIES

ANALYSIS

Due to the continued strength of Sacramento and Klamath fall Chinook stocks, the PFMC adopted ocean Chinook fisheries off Oregon south of Cape Falcon that are similar to the relatively robust seasons in 2012-2014. Some additional constraints were necessary this year due to impact limitations on listed Coastal California Chinook.

Catches of Chinook in 2014 Oregon ocean troll fisheries were the

highest since 2005, at 208,000 fish; 2014 was a rare year in which the Oregon troll fleet substantially outperformed the California troll fleet. Strong catches of Chinook in ocean troll fisheries should continue in 2015. A strong forecast for Columbia River hatchery coho and higher allowable impacts for lower Columbia River wild coho allow for continued strong recreational coho fishery opportunity south of Cape Falcon, including mark-selective fishing in July and August and non-mark-selective fishing in September.

Details of the season structures and quotas adopted by the PFMC for commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries are contained in Attachment 4.

OPTIONS

1. Ocean salmon fisheries (Staff Recommendation)

Adopt the federal regulations for state waters as proposed in Attachment 3.

ISSUE 2

OCEAN SPORT AND COMMERCIAL CHINOOK REGULATIONS FOR TERMINAL AREAS

ANALYSIS

Elk River Ocean Terminal Fishery

The 2015 forecast for Elk River Chinook is 3,600 hatchery fish, which is less than the three-year average return. The forecast for the Sixes River is 1,600 Chinook, which is similar to the three-year average return.

In 2014, the sport season was November 1-30 with bag limits of two Chinook per day, but no more than one non adipose fin-clipped Chinook per day and ten per season. The 2014 commercial season was November 1-30 with a landing and possession limit of 20 Chinook per day and a minimum size of 26 inches. The Department is proposing the same season and bag limit and landing limit regulations for 2015 for both fisheries.

The commercial fishery has historically been a no quota fishery, and staff is proposing no quota for 2015. Commercial catch in 2014 was 566 fish and the highest catch observed since 1993 was 2,200 in 2004; neither of these years was operated under a quota.

No changes to the OARs are necessary if the Commission adopts the staff recommendation.

Chetco River Ocean Terminal Fishery

The 2015 forecast for the Chetco River is 2,950 Chinook. The forecast for the Winchuck River is about 500 fish.

The Chetco terminal area includes the area between the north shore of Twin Rocks and the Oregon/California border. In 2014, the sport

season was October 1-13. The daily bag limit was two Chinook per day, but no more than one could be non fin-clipped (limit of five non fin-clipped for the season). A total of 1,115 fish were caught. As in past years, the October dates were structured to encompass two full weekends of recreational opportunity.

The 2014 commercial season was the earlier of October 13-31 or a 750 Chinook quota, with a 20 Chinook daily landing limit and 28 inch minimum length. This quota was not reached, with 473 Chinook landed.

Proposed dates for 2015 are:

- Recreational October 1-12, encompassing two weekends
- Commercial troll October 12-31.

No changes to the OARs are necessary if the Commission adopts the staff recommendation, although if the Commission wishes to make changes, those changes would be made in OAR 635-013-0007, reprinted without change from last year.

OPTIONS

1. Chetco Terminal Area (Staff Recommendation)

Sport - October 1-12 with a two daily Chinook bag limit (no more than one non fin-clipped and five non fin-clipped per season) and 24 inch minimum length.

Commercial - October 12 through the earlier of October 31 or a 750 Chinook quota, with a daily landing and possession limit of 20 per day and a 28 inch minimum length.

ISSUE 3

HOUSEKEEPING FOR FISH RECEIVING TICKETS

ANALYSIS

The annual salmon management measures adopted by the PFMC require that the number of troll-caught salmon and halibut be recorded on state fish receiving tickets in addition to the weight in pounds. This is necessary to track troll-caught salmon and halibut catch because salmon quotas, salmon and halibut trip limits, and salmon-halibut ratio landing limits are all based upon numbers of fish instead of pounds. The requirement to include number of fish on salmon troll tickets is not currently specified in state rule.

Staff recommends adding this requirement to the salmon troll and limited fish seller fish receiving ticket OARs (OAR 635-006-0212(3) and 635-006-0213(1)) in order to maintain consistency with federal regulations, and provide staff, law enforcement, and the public with clear descriptions of fish receiving ticket requirements. This rule would only apply to fish tickets containing troll-caught salmon or halibut. In addition, the draft changes the date to 2015.

OPTIONS

1. Require that the number of salmon and halibut be recorded on salmon troll and limited fish seller fish receiving tickets as shown in Attachment 3 (Staff Recommendation).

**DRAFT
MOTION**

I move to adopt the 2015 regulations for ocean sport and commercial salmon fisheries, and ocean terminal sport and commercial fisheries as proposed by staff and as reflected in draft OARs shown in Attachment 3.

**EFFECTIVE
DATE**

April 27, 2015.