



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

On April 13, 2022, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) adopted ocean salmon fishing regulations for ocean waters from three to 200 miles offshore (federal jurisdiction). The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will be asked to adopt matching permanent regulations for ocean waters from zero to three miles offshore (state jurisdiction). New federal regulations are expected to be in place effective May 16, 2022. Some Oregon fisheries occur prior to that date, and these were established by the 2021 federal rule, and modified by in-season actions taken at the March and April 2022 PFMC meetings. Ocean salmon seasons adopted by the PFMC are structured to address conservation and management objectives, as well as Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements for various Chinook and coho salmon stocks.

The primary limiting factor for 2022 Chinook fisheries in areas South of Cape Falcon was ESA impact rate limits on Columbia River natural tule fall Chinook Salmon. While the overall 2022 forecast for Columbia River fall Chinook Salmon of 485,500 fish is slightly higher than the 2021 actual return estimate of 481,300 fish, commercial troll fisheries in the area from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain were severely reduced by over 30 fishing days, as compared to the earlier Season Alternative I, in order to achieve a total fishery exploitation rate of no more than 38%, the ESA guidance received from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

Returns of Sacramento River fall Chinook Salmon have remained low but stable over the last three years, but Klamath River Chinook Salmon abundance continues to be of concern. The ocean harvest rate on 4-year-old Klamath River Chinook Salmon is the surrogate metric to meet the ESA standard for listed California Coastal Chinook. This year's NMFS guideline was to decrease the ESA standard of 16% total ocean harvest rate to 10%. This action is intended to increase protection for this stock by significantly reducing fishery impacts on Klamath fall Chinook.

The ocean-abundance forecast for Columbia River coho salmon is 997,200 fish which is higher than the 2021 post-season estimate of 829,800 fish. Within the total forecast, ESA-listed wild coho salmon returning to Lower Columbia River tributaries are forecasted at 65,700 fish, which is similar to the 2021 post-season estimate of 70,500 fish.

The 2022 forecast for Oregon Coastal Natural (OCN) coho salmon forecast is 222,400 fish, which is lower than the 2021 post-season estimate of 273,300 fish. ESA impact limitations on OCN coho are usually the primary limiting factor in constructing coho fisheries in Oregon areas South of Cape Falcon.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The following opportunities for public comment were provided:

- The Department held a pre-season public meeting on February 28, 2022.
- The PFMC meetings are open to the public with many opportunities for public testimony throughout the development of preliminary (March 2022) fishery

management alternatives and final (April 2022) season measures for commercial and recreational salmon fisheries.

- Public testimony on the three preliminary PFMC season alternatives was also allowed at the March 18 Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting.
- A PFMC Oregon Public Hearing was held on March 23 to discuss salmon fishery options for the area South of Cape Falcon to the OR/CA border.

Due to COVID, nearly all meetings have been held virtually, which appears to have expanded the ability of the public to attend and provide input.

ISSUE 1

Recreational and Commercial Ocean Salmon Fishing Seasons

ANALYSIS

The main constraint in planning 2022 ocean Chinook Salmon fisheries for south of Cape Falcon was meeting the impact limitations for Columbia River natural tule and California Coastal Chinook. This year, the PFMC’s Fisheries Regulation Analyses Model (FRAM) showed larger than anticipated impacts on Columbia River natural tules that were addressed through modification of multiple fisheries including reduced fishing days from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain. The PFMC, in accordance with NOAA, also reduced overall harvest on listed California Coastal Chinook by reducing the allowable harvest rate on 4-year-old Klamath River fall Chinook to no more than 10%. These reductions in allowable fishery impacts provide substantial conservation buffers, but also resulted in significant constraints for Oregon fisheries in 2022. These conservation measures to protect ESA-listed Chinook populations also resulted in lower ocean fishery impacts to Sacramento and Klamath fall Chinook populations, compared to what would otherwise occur.

The ocean-abundance forecast for Columbia River coho salmon is moderately high. Both Lower Columbia wild coho and OCN coho salmon abundance forecasts are lower than last year’s actual abundances; however, recreational coho salmon fishery opportunities South of Cape Falcon are similar to 2021. While impacts to OCN coho are the primary limiting factor for coho fisheries South of Cape Falcon, impacts to this stock from ocean fisheries are projected to remain well below allowable limits.

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

ISSUE 2

Ocean Terminal Area Fisheries

ANALYSIS

The forecasted return of Chetco River fall Chinook is about 4,050 fish, which would be a substantial improvement over recent returns and represents the largest return since 2016. Under the Rogue fall Chinook Conservation Plan, ocean terminal area fisheries may occur if the average of the last two years’ returns and the preseason forecast exceeds 2,740 fish. For

2022, the average value for those three years is 2,585, about 155 fish below the threshold. Therefore, staff is not proposing ocean terminal fisheries for the Chetco area in 2022.

The forecast for 2022 Elk River fall Chinook is for a river mouth return of 2,332 hatchery and 1,456 natural origin adults. Due to low returns, there have not been Elk River Ocean Terminal Area fisheries since 2018. Overall abundances have improved since a low in 2018, but the 2021 forecast for natural origin Chinook Salmon was not met and the 2022 forecast is less than last year's forecast. At the time of this writing, staff is still considering whether to propose additional harvest opportunities in this area.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt staff recommendations as reflected in draft OARs in Attachment 3.
2. Modify staff recommendation for one or more items
3. Status quo

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. Option 1.

DRAFT MOTION

I move to amend OAR 635 Divisions 003 and 013 as proposed by staff in Attachment 3.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon filing