



## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

This agenda item requests Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adoption of administrative rules for the 2025 Ocean Salmon Fisheries and Ocean Terminal Fisheries.

On April 15, 2025, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) will adopt ocean salmon fishing regulations for ocean waters from three to 200 nautical 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 nautical miles offshore (state jurisdiction). New federal regulations are expected to be in place effective May 16, 2025, when officially adopted by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. Ocean salmon seasons developed 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 Central Oregon Coast Management Zone for commercial and recreational salmon fisheries reaches from Cape Falcon near the town of Manzanita to Humbug Mountain near the town of Port Orford. The most southern Oregon management area for salmon fisheries is the Oregon portion of the Klamath Management Zone, reaching from Humbug Mountain south to the Oregon/California border.

Commercial and recreational ocean salmon fisheries are important to Oregon's economy. During the 2024 management period which was restricted, the commercial troll fishery along the Oregon coast landed 253,070 pounds of salmon with an ex-vessel value of \$2.575 million. The economic impact of recreational ocean salmon fisheries depends primarily on the number of open days. Last year, there were 77,369 recreational angler trips, which was slightly higher than 2023 (76,360 trips). A total of 5,665 Chinook Salmon and 69,939 coho salmon were landed by recreational fishers in 2024.

The PFMC salmon fisheries are managed to protect weak stocks from fishery impacts. Intensive fishery shaping and planning is required to optimize fishing opportunity for healthy stocks, while protecting the weaker stocks. Harvest is scaled to abundance so that fishing rates are reduced when stock abundances are low. Combined with management of depressed stocks, the PFMC, through its technical committees and work groups, evaluates the circumstances of each year based on current conditions. Thus, changes from year to year are the norm, and the magnitude of those changes can be dramatic.

This year, the primary limiting Chinook stocks for fisheries south of Cape Falcon are from the Sacramento and Klamath rivers. These stocks migrate along the Oregon coast and are caught in Oregon recreational and commercial troll fisheries. Both stocks have experienced low escapement in recent years primarily due to over-forecasting, poor in-river environmental conditions, and poor juvenile survival. Forecasts for both stocks in 2025 are low and comparable to 2023 and will severely constrain salmon fisheries in California and Oregon. Fisheries will be shaped to focus on more abundant local stocks, including coho salmon, while seeking to reduce impacts to depressed California stocks.

The 2025 salmon fisheries off the north Oregon coast and in the lower Columbia River are further constrained by the pre-season forecast for Lower Columbia River Natural coho salmon. Fisheries in 2025 will be managed to not exceed a marine exploitation rate of 15.3 percent.

The 2025 ocean-abundance forecast for Columbia River coho salmon is 493,600 fish which is lower than the 2024 estimated return of 737,000 fish. Within the total forecast, ESA-listed wild coho salmon returning to Lower Columbia River tributaries are forecasted at 72,000 fish, which is similar to the 2024 post-season estimate of 74,700 fish.

The 2025 forecast for Oregon Coastal Natural coho salmon of 289,000 fish is higher than the 2024 post-season estimated return of 200,400 fish. The ESA impact limitations on Oregon Coastal Natural coho are less constraining in 2025 with an allowable exploitation rate of 30 percent which is the same as last year. Better ocean survival and higher parental escapement estimates contributed to the higher allowable exploitation rate. This ESA-listed stock is 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, 2025, in Newport.
- The PFMC meetings are open to the public with many opportunities for public testimony throughout the development of preliminary (March 2025) fishery management alternatives and final (April 2025) season measures for commercial and recreational salmon fisheries.
- A PFMC Oregon public hearing was held virtually on March 25 to discuss salmon fishery options for the area south of Cape Falcon to the OR/CA border.

Nearly all meetings have been held in a hybrid format providing for in-person as well as virtual participation, which appears to have expanded the ability of the public to attend and provide input.

In anticipation of the Commission consideration of the proposed rules, the department published notice of the proposed rulemaking (Attachment 2).

Additionally, the public has an opportunity to provide comment prior to (in writing) or (orally) during the hearing that occurs at the Commission meeting.

## **ISSUE**

2025 Recreational and commercial ocean salmon fishing seasons

## ANALYSIS

### *Chinook Salmon*

For Sacramento River fall Chinook salmon, the minimum escapement of hatchery and natural area adult spawners will need to be between 122,000 and 180,000 fish. Current escapement estimates for the three fishing alternatives range from 127,421 to 156,286 fish with a final estimate to be determined at the April PFMC meeting, however, it is clear that this variable will be most limiting to the development of 2025 domestic fisheries off the Oregon Coast. Therefore, fishing opportunity for Chinook in the commercial troll and recreational fisheries this year will be constrained.

The PFMC is considering guidance from the National Marine Fisheries Service to reduce the maximum exploitation rate for Klamath River Fall Chinook Salmon to less than or equal to 10%, however, a final, adopted rate will not be available until the April PFMC meeting. The minimum natural area adult escapement is expected to be 18,687 fish, compared to 36,511 fish last year.

### *Coho Salmon*

For coho salmon, Lower Columbia River Natural and Southern Oregon/Northern California Coastal coho salmon are the most limiting stocks in 2025. The maximum exploitation rate for Lower Columbia River Natural coho is 23% and will be more restrictive than the 30% limit for Oregon Coastal Natural coho salmon.

For threatened Southern Oregon/Northern Coastal California coho, all stock components will need to meet or exceed the objectives to remain below their respective exploitation rate ceilings. Most notably, Trinity River natural coho must remain at a 16% exploitation rate or less. Details of the season structures and quotas adopted by the PFMC for commercial, recreational, and tribal ocean salmon fisheries will be contained in the Pre-season Report III, which is scheduled to be released by the PFMC's Salmon Technical Team by late April 2025.

## 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:

Option 1. Adopt staff recommendations as reflected in draft OARs in Attachment 3.

**DRAFT MOTION:**

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

**Effective Date:** *Upon Filing*