

Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan

2019 Annual Report

The Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan (OCCCP) was adopted by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in March 2007. The plan serves as the State of Oregon's management plan for the Oregon Coast (OC) Coho Salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU). The OC Coho Salmon ESU is comprised of 5 strata (North Coast, Mid-Coast, Mid-South Coast, Lakes, and Umpqua) and 21 independent OC Coho Salmon populations within these 5 strata.

ESU Status Summary

Wild OC Coho Salmon spawner abundance estimates for the ESU increased from 74,060 fish in 2018 to 95,138 in 2019. Fishing harvest was less than the allowable harvest approved by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) under Amendment 13 (A-13). Overall, overwinter rearing habitat likely continues to limit freshwater productivity. However, focused efforts for population scale OC Coho Salmon habitat restoration actions are being supported by state and federal agencies, tribes, and other non-governmental organizations. These entities are working to develop and implement Coho Salmon-specific strategic action plans to address primary limiting factors. Given that freshwater production continues to be limiting, implementation of the OCCCP should continue.

Measurable Criteria

As mandated by the Native Fish Conservation Policy, measurable criteria were developed to evaluate progress towards reaching the desired status goals for each of the independent populations in six criteria categories: (1) abundance, (2) persistence, (3) productivity, (4) distribution, (5) diversity, and (6) habitat. Using data and summaries from the Western Oregon Rearing Project and the Oregon Adult Salmonid Inventory & Sampling Project, the results of each criterion's status for 2019 are summarized below. More information on these measurable criteria can be found at the ODFW Recovery Tracker website (<http://www.odfwrecoverytracker.org>).

Abundance

This criterion is intended to ensure adequate numbers of naturally-produced spawners return from the ocean to guarantee the health of the population and provide, in the majority of years, economic, societal, and ecological benefits. Naturally-produced OC Coho Salmon spawner abundance estimates for the ESU increased from 74,060 fish in 2018 to 95,138 in 2019. However, wild adult Coho Salmon spawner abundance in 2019 was lower than average, at 76% of the 29-year average for the ESU. The marine survival category under A-13 was Low, and the abundance estimate was approximately 25.6% of the ESU abundance goal identified in the OCCCP. Escapement abundance goals were developed for each of the independent populations to ensure naturally-produced spawners are broadly distributed throughout the ESU. None of the independent populations met their escapement goals in 2019.

Persistence

This criterion uses the forecast probability of persistence for each independent population based on results from population viability simulation models. A persistence criterion with a probability of 99% or greater significantly increases the likelihood that the ESU will remain viable under extreme marine survival conditions. This metric was last assessed in 2007, and is being updated during the 12-year OCCC assessment that is currently in progress. In 2007, 11 of the 21 independent populations passed the criteria with three populations (the Necanicum, Salmon, and the Sixes) falling below 95% persistence.

Productivity

The criterion for productivity is the annual estimate of naturally-produced recruits per spawner (R/S) in each independent population and the ESU. The number of recruits must be equal or greater than the number of spawners that produced them for a population to avoid further decline during low levels of abundance. The productivity criterion was designed to confirm individual populations are performing in accordance with this expectation.

Although not directly used in the productivity metric, juvenile density and parr abundance information relative to spawners provides some insight into freshwater productivity (note: the R/S productivity metric also includes marine production, as the “recruits” are returning adult spawners). The 2019 abundance estimate was 3.2 million parr. After improving from lows averaging 910,000 during 1998-1999, parr abundance has been between 2.9 and 4.9 million since 2000. Site occupancy was 78% in 2019, which was one of only two years this decade where the metric did not meet the NOAA Fisheries recovery criterion of $\geq 80\%$ of sites occupied. The abundance estimate for the 2016-2018 brood group was lower than those for the 2007-2015 brood groups and higher than the estimate for the 1998-2000 brood group. Density in the ESU and the number of sites that were fully seeded were similar from 2018 to 2019.

Data suggest the rearing capacity may be slightly higher in the Mid-South Coast relative to the other strata. The 5 highest (and 12 of the 20 highest) parr abundance estimates were in the Mid-South Coast.

Within Population Distribution

This criterion has two metrics. The first uses the percentage of random, spatially-balanced surveys that have greater or equal to four wild adult Coho Salmon spawners/mile for each independent population. In 2019, 322 sites were surveyed in the OC Coho ESU, this is slightly more than the 5-year average number of sites surveyed (276). The occupancy rate was lower than the 5-year average for the ESU. Wild Coho Salmon site occupancy in 2019 was below average in 11 of 20 populations. Occupancy was generally higher in the North Coast and Mid-Coast strata. Abundance in the North Coast stratum was slightly above average (109%). Abundance in the Mid-Coast and Lakes strata was furthest from average (56% and 54%).

The second metric for this criterion uses a comparison of the spatial pattern of potential spawning distribution to that observed using spatial statistics for each independent population. Data for this second metric are not currently available.

Diversity

The metric for this criterion is the average of the 100-year harmonic mean of spawner abundance (projected from a population viability model) for each independent population. The threshold value for the metric is a harmonic mean of at least 1,200 naturally-produced adult Coho Salmon spawners. This metric was last assessed in 2007, and is being updated during the 12-year OCCCP assessment that is currently in progress. However, although annual spawner abundance estimates are not the same as the 100-year harmonic mean projection for spawner abundances, in 2019, 15 of the 21 independent populations had annual estimates that exceeded 1,200 spawners.

Habitat Condition

This metric is defined as the amount of available high quality habitat across all freshwater life stages in each independent, non-lake population. With the exception of the three lake populations, achieving the desired status goals of the OCCCP will require significant improvement to the quality of freshwater habitat. High quality habitat is defined as habitat that can produce 2,800 smolts/mile. Many different metrics go into the estimation of high quality habitat.

A 5-year roll-up assessment of habitat trends at the strata level was last completed for the NOAA Fisheries Status Review in 2015, the data was also used in NOAA's Endangered Species Act OC Coho Recovery Plan (2016). Even though restoration efforts have been ongoing, there was minimal evidence of an improving trend in stream habitat conditions for the ESU. There was evidence of declines in habitat complexity and increases in fine sediment in several strata. Overall, overwinter rearing habitat likely continues to limit freshwater productivity.

Conservation Project Implementation

In 2019, ODFW continued to implement its commitments identified in the OCCCP. The status of those commitments are discussed below by action, as identified in the OCCCP.

Hatchery Management- This commitment was met and is being maintained. Hatchery releases were significantly curtailed; the last hatchery Coho Salmon releases into the North Umpqua occurred in May 2006 and the last hatchery releases into the Salmon River occurred in May 2007.

Harvest Management- This commitment was met and is being maintained. Harvest impact rates to naturally-produced OC Coho Salmon from fisheries continue to be managed through the PFMC's Salmon Fishery Management Plan and the use of Amendment 13 Harvest Management Matrix, found by NOAA Fisheries to be consistent with the recovery of OC Coho Salmon. The Table below shows allowable harvest impacts approved by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) under Amendment 13 and the actual harvest impact calculated post-season from 2015-2019.

Year	A-13 Allowable Harvest Impact	Actual Harvest Impact
2015	15%	19.9%
2016	20%	8.7%
2017	30%	11.6%
2018	15%	12.7%
2019	15%	14.7%

Table 1. Allowable and Post-harvest Impacts for 2015-2019.

Western Oregon Stream Restoration Program- This commitment is on-going. Budget constraints have led to a continued reduction in ODFW biologists supporting this program. High priority habitat restoration projects that create high quality OC Coho Salmon rearing habitat continue to be developed and implemented by various entities across the ESU, with a reduced level of ODFW technical involvement. Priority is placed on projects with willing landowners in areas that support high quality OC Coho Salmon rearing habitat. Technical assistance is being provided to local partners, and new restoration techniques for addressing key limiting factors are continually being explored.

ODFW has two Western Oregon Stream Restoration Program biologists that provide a significant amount of support in coordinating, planning, and implementing OWEB’s investments in the strata where these biologists are located (North Coast and Umpqua).

The OWEB Investment Tracking Tool located in [Oregon Explorer](#) was used to identify activities funded by OWEB to support conservation and recovery of the OC Coho Salmon ESU in 2019.

The Table below summarizes the OWEB’s investments by category for each OC Coho Salmon population for actions implemented by organizations such as watershed councils, tribes, Soils and Water Conservation Districts, state, and federal agencies. Occasionally, grants are awarded by strata if actions target more than one population.

Population	Capacity Building	Outreach/ Stakeholder Engagement	Monitoring	Restoration	Technical Assistance	Total
North Coast	\$118,425	-	-	-	-	\$118,425
Necanicum	\$118,425	\$32,892	-	\$10,000		\$161,317
Nehalem	\$118,425	-	-	\$10,287	\$42,324	\$171,036
Tillamook	\$94,695	-	-	\$20,747	-	\$115,442
Nestucca	\$100,516	-	-	\$245,629	\$76,734	\$422,879
Mid-Coast	\$118,425	-	\$115,015	-	-	\$233,440
Salmon	-	-	-	-	-	-
Siletz	-	-	-	\$100,100	-	\$100,100
Yaquina	-	-	-	-	\$42,468	\$42,468
Beaver	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alsea	-	-	-	\$4,990	\$16,177	\$21,167
Siuslaw	\$118,425	-	\$36,100	\$221,153	\$89,948	\$465,626
Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Siltcoos	-	-	-	-	\$3,099	\$3,099
Tahkenitch	-	-	-	-	\$219,735	\$219,735
Tenmile	\$116,457	-	\$56,666	\$24,054	-	\$197,177
Umpqua	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Umpqua	\$118,425	-	-	\$2,705	\$70,352	\$191,482
Middle Umpqua	-	-	-	\$136,448	-	\$136,448
North Umpqua	\$118,425	-	-	\$286,765	\$188,593	\$593,783
South Umpqua	-	-	-	\$243,472	\$30,112	\$273,584
Mid-South Coast	\$94,695	\$47,311	-	\$22,500	\$194,155	\$358,661
Coos	\$118,425	-	-	\$326,758	\$74,760	\$519,943
Coquille	\$118,425	-	-	\$26,015	\$208,753	\$353,193
Floras	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sixes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	\$1,472,188	\$80,203	\$207,781	\$1,681,623	\$1,257,210	\$4,699,005

Table 2. OWEB funded activities by population and activity type in 2019.

Habitat Protection- This commitment is on-going. The Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds has fostered significant investments in habitat restoration and protection. Steady increases in instream habitat restoration structures have been documented by ODFW habitat monitoring. More time is likely needed for these and on-going restoration projects to become detectable in habitat trends at the ESU and strata scale of monitoring.

ODFW continues to have staff committed to partnering with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), NOAA Restoration Center, Wild Salmon Center, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation on a Business Plan approach for the conservation of Oregon's coast Coho Salmon. The intent of the Coho Business Plan is to achieve the following:

1) Promote conservation and recovery of coast Coho Salmon in Oregon, and describe the essential role of voluntary habitat protection and restoration efforts.

2) Identify the highest priority projects required at the population (watershed) scale to advance regional recovery goals.

3) Aggregate the cumulative costs and anticipated benefits of these projects, and coordinate funding to support locally-led implementation.

Projects included in the Coho Business Plan are generated through a scientifically-based planning process that local communities use to develop a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for a given Coho Salmon population. As the number of projects contained in the Business Plan increase, the Partnership will work with state, federal, and private partners to direct funding into locally-led project implementation. Additionally, OWEB developed the Focused Investment Partnership grant program, which can focus significant funding toward implementing SAP projects if grants are successfully obtained.

Promote Beaver Dams and Associated Habitat- This commitment is on-going. ODFW continues to promote beaver dams in OC Coho Salmon rearing habitats that support the objectives of the OCCCP.

Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Program- This commitment was implemented and is on-going. ODFW continues to conduct research, monitoring, and evaluation related to the OCCCP.

Oregon Plan Outreach Program- This commitment is on-going. ODFW has designated staff to coordinate with key partners on actions to address the objectives in the OCCCP.