ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT FOR 2024
FALL CHINOOK SALMON CONSERVATION PLAN
ROGUE SPECIES MANAGEMENT UNIT
OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
ROGUE WATERSHED DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

In January of 2013, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission formally adopted a conservation plan for fall Chinook salmon in the Rogue Species Management Unit (SMU). This plan calls for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to complete annual reports that will include, at least, the following elements: (1) SMU status in relation to the desired status and conservation status statements embedded in the conservation plan, (2) summaries of annual efforts to monitor SMU attributes, (3) implications of any research or evaluation projects completed during the reporting year, (4) any updated assessments of population attributes completed during the reporting year, and (5) presentation of the rationale associated with any changes in management actions made during the reporting year.

This report summarizes the status of the SMU in relation to desired status and conservation status through the 2024 return year, completed management actions, and 2025 preseason forecasts in relation to conservation status and maximum sustained yield.

A copy of the conservation plan, and annual progress reports, is available on the ODFW website at:
http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/rogue_fall_chinook_conservation_plan.asp

SUMMARY OF SMU STATUS

Two population strata compose the SMU: (1) the Rogue stratum and (2) the coastal stratum. The two strata are differentiated by life history and genetic differences within the constituent independent populations of naturally produced fall Chinook salmon (NP CHF). Where possible, status criteria were developed for each independent population monitored by ODFW. Populations in the Rogue stratum are monitored as an aggregate by sampling at Huntley Park near the mouth of the Rogue River, except that NP CHF in the Lower Rogue population area are also monitored annually by conducting spawning ground surveys.

Monitoring of SMU attributes is designed to produce metrics that are to be used to characterize the current status of the SMU. All monitoring needed to update SMU status was completed by ODFW in 2024, and the results are included in tables 1 and 2.

In addition to other actions completed in 2024, a fall Chinook angler creel survey was completed in the Rogue estuary; monitored abundance of fall Chinook and estimated escapement into Bear Creek; and monitored fall Chinook abundance and distribution in the Illinois River after the removal of Pomeroy Dam in 2024.

Table 1. Comparisons of singular elements of current and **desired** status for naturally produced fall Chinook salmon in the Rogue Species Management Unit. Desired status criteria are described in the conservation plan, and **both metrics cover the most recent ten-year period**. Underlined metrics of current status did not meet desired status criteria.

Status Element	Desired Status	Current Status	2024 Estimate
ROGUE AGGREGATE POPULATIONS			
Adult Abundance[a]	≥54,400	38,683	53,342
Age Structure[b]	≥10%	4.3%	4.2%
Run Timing[c]	≥8%	7.9%	3.7%
Run Composition[d]	≤5%	5.5%	6.9%
LOWER ROGUE POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	≥3,500	2,679	1,999
Spawner Composition[f]	≤10%	3.2%	13%
CHETCO POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	≥3,800	3,220	3,614
Age Structure[h]	≥16%	17%	25.5%
Spawner Composition[f]	≤18%	12%	15%
WINCHUCK POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	≥1,000	756	763
Juvenile Abundance[g]	≥125,000	155,929	75,885
Spawner Composition[f]	≤10%	6%	9%
PISTOL POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	≥1,300	847	706
Spawner Composition[f]	≤5%	3%	10%
HUNTER POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	≥560	433	287
Spawner Composition[f]	≤5%	3%	10%

[a] Number of age 3-6 NP CHF that pass Huntley Park.
[b] Relative abundance of age 5+6 fish among NP CHF that pass Huntley Park.
[c] Relative abundance of October migrants among NP CHF that pass Huntley Park.
[d] Relative abundance of hatchery fish among CHF that pass Huntley Park.
[e] Number of NP CHF spawners.
[f] Relative abundance of hatchery fish among CHF spawners.
[g] Number of juvenile NP CHF produced in areas upstream of the South Fork.
[h] Relative abundance of age 5+6 fish among NP CHF spawners.

Table 2. Status of the Rogue Fall Chinook Salmon Species Management Unit as compared to **conservation** criteria. Conservation status criteria are described in the conservation plan and cover, unless otherwise noted, the most recent three-year period. Underlined metrics of current status did not meet conservation status criteria.

Status Element	Conservation Criterion	Current Status	2024 Estimate
ROGUE AGGREGATE POPULATIONS			
Adult Abundance[a]	<20,400[i]	41,448	53,342
Age Structure[b]	<3%	4.9%	4.2%
Run Timing[c]	<5%	4.2%	3.7%
Run Composition[d]	>10%	5.9%	6.9%
LOWER ROGUE POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	<1,500	1,579	1,999
Spawner Composition[f]	>15%	5.0%	13%
CHETCO POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	<1,440[i]	4,629	3,614
Age Structure[h]	<5%	17.5%	25.5%
Spawner Composition[f]	>20%	22%	15%
WINCHUCK POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	<300[i]	727	763
Juvenile Abundance[g]	<50,000[j]	145,930	75,885
Spawner Composition[f]	>15%	14%	9%
PISTOL POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	<540	1159	706
Spawner Composition[f]	>10%	5%	10%
HUNTER POPULATION			
Adult Abundance[e]	<300	193	287
Spawner Composition[f]	>10%	3%	10%

[a] Number of age 3-6 NP CHF that pass Huntley Park.
[b] Relative abundance of age 5+6 fish among NP CHF that pass Huntley Park.
[c] Relative abundance of October migrants among NP CHF that pass Huntley Park.
[d] Relative abundance of hatchery fish among CHF that pass Huntley Park.
[e] Number of NP CHF spawners.
[f] Relative abundance of hatchery fish among CHF spawners.
[g] Number of juvenile NP CHF produced upstream of the South Fork.
[h] Relative abundance of age 5+6 fish among NP CHF spawners.
[i] Criteria are based on a running two-year average.
[j] Criterion covers every year.

The Rogue Aggregate population reached conservation status for run timing in 2024. The population was nearing conservation status in 2023. Population monitoring of the Rogue Aggregate in 2025, and lower Rogue and Illinois spawning ground surveys will help guide management actions in 2026, if the population remains in conservation status.

The Chetco River reached conservation status for run composition in 2023 and was still in conservation status in 2024. No hatchery smolt reductions were implemented in 2023 or 2024 to address conservation status. Program related production issues will most likely address conservation status; 1) The smolt program released only half of the production in 2022; 2) Early releases of smolts in 2023 due to the Anvil Fire: and less than full production was released in 2024.

Hunter Creek continues to be in conservation status for abundance. The creek was closed to fall Chinook harvest in 2024 in response to poor returns in 2022 and 2023 and a poor forecast for 2024. Abundance was higher than forecasted in 2024 and an improved forecast for 2025 has allowed fishery managers to open the fishery to a reduced bag limit.

COMPLETED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS - ROGUE STRATUM

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted Rogue Alternative 4, outlined in the conservation plan, as the preferred suite of management strategies to be employed by ODFW. Some of the relevant actions completed by ODFW during 2024 are briefly discussed below. A tabulated progress summary related to management actions described in the conservation plan is included in Tables 3 and 4. In addition, ODFW conducted spawning ground surveys in Upper Rogue, Applegate, and Illinois rivers.

Management Strategy 4.1

Many of the actions within Management Strategy 4.1 relate to seasonal operations of Lost Creek and Applegate reservoirs by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). ODFW worked cooperatively with the USACE to identify and implement reservoir release strategies designed to enhance naturally produced fall Chinook (actions 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.4, 4.1.5, 4.1.6, 4.1.7, 4.1.9). A weekly conference call, implemented in 2013 to facilitate communication was continued in 2024. ODFW participated in the USACE annual winter management coordination meeting.

Applegate River flows were managed to maximize fall Chinook distribution and spawning success in 2024.

Average flow at the USGS Agness gage was 2,275 cfs August 10 – September 10 (action 4.1.7). Flow met ODFW recommendations during the fall Chinook migration. Disease-related mortality of adult fall Chinook in 2024 was estimated by ODFW to be below 2%. Mortality estimates are derived from flow-based models. Additional management actions would be triggered if disease-related losses were forecast to reach 40% (action 4.1.8).

The minimum flow needed to protect juvenile fish rearing in the mainstem in summer is estimated to be 1,000 cfs as measured at the USGS Grants Pass gage. The flow in 2024 exceeded this level, averaging 1,739 cfs at Grants Pass July 1 – August 10 (action 4.1.9). The lowest average daily flow during the period was 1,590 cfs on July 19 and 20.

ODFW participated in a variety of habitat protection activities (action 4.1.14), including review of water right applications, removal/fill applications, R/F emergency authorizations, Conditional Use permits, and compliance monitoring of municipal and county riparian ordinances.

Management Strategy 4.2

ODFW's Aquatic Invasive Species program deployed two watercraft inspection crews in the Rogue Watershed District in 2024 (action 4.2.1). Crews based in Central Point and Brookings conducted boat inspections, primarily on the I-5, Hwy 97, and Hwy 101 corridors, from late spring through early fall.

Management Strategy 4.3

The minimum flow needed to protect juvenile fish rearing in the mainstem in summer is 1,000 cfs as measured at the Grants Pass gage. The flow in 2024 exceeded this level, averaging 1,590 cfs at Grants Pass July 1 – August 10. Lower water temperatures in downstream areas, as a result of the increased flow, resulted in fewer predation losses because of decreases in pikeminnow metabolic rates (action 4.3.2).

ODFW continued to support non-native Umpqua pikeminnow removal in 2024. The Rogue Pikeminnow Roundup encourages anglers to keep and remove pikeminnow instead of releasing them while fishing (action 4.3.1).

Management Strategy 4.4

Zone regulations were employed in 2024 because fall Chinook escapement was forecasted to exceed escapement goals related to conservation criteria (action 4.4.1).

Angler Creel

A fall Chinook creel survey was conducted in the Rogue Estuary in 2024 from mid-July to the end of October. The creel was intended to address the concerns over harvest estimates, harvest rates, and the impacts to the Rogue aggregate fall Chinook. The creel followed eCreel protocols and was compared to estimates generated by the typical electronic license harvest expansion (ELS).

The total wild fall Chinook harvest estimate from eCreel was 4,435 and from the ELS expansion was 3,949. The total hatchery fall Chinook harvest from eCreel was 281 and from ELS expansion was 253. All Chinook combined harvest rates in the estuary fishery were 7.11% (ELS) and 7.91% (eCreel).

Management Strategy 4.5

ODFW did not complete any work specific to Management Strategy 4.5 in 2024.

COMPLETED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS - COASTAL STRATUM

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted Coastal Alternative 6, outlined in the conservation plan, as the preferred suite of management strategies to be employed by ODFW. Some of the relevant actions, completed by ODFW during 2024, are briefly discussed below. A tabulated progress summary related to management actions described in the conservation plan is included in Table 4.

Management Strategy 6.1

ODFW participated in a variety of habitat protection activities (actions 6.1.2, 6.1.8), including review of water right applications, removal/fill applications, R/F emergency authorizations, Conditional Use permits, and compliance monitoring of municipal and county riparian ordinances.

Management Strategy 6.2

ODFW's Aquatic Invasive Species program deployed two watercraft inspection crews in the Rogue Watershed District in 2024 (action 6.2.1). Crews based in Central Point and Brookings conducted boat inspections, primarily on the I-5, Hwy 97, and Hwy 101 corridors, from late spring through early fall.

Management Strategy 6.3

Zone regulations were not employed in one basin in 2024 because fall Chinook escapement was forecasted to not exceed escapement goals related to conservation criteria (action 6.3.1) in some of the watersheds. Bag limit reductions were enacted on Hunter Creek to address conservation concerns.

The Chetco ocean terminal area recreational and commercial fishery in 2024 was not opened. The fishery was not opened because the Winchuck preseason forecasts was below S_{MSY} (action 6.3.5).

Management Strategy 6.4

A release group of smolts was not acclimated at Ferry Creek reservoir (Chetco) in 2024 and instead was released with mainstem releases due to water quality concerns at the acclimation site. Smolts were released in October (action 6.4.3). The purpose of the acclimation project is to determine whether 1) returning adult Chinook acclimated at Ferry Creek contribute to the river fishery at a higher rate than non-acclimated Chinook; 2) acclimated Chinook are recovered from natural spawning areas at a lower rate than non-acclimated Chinook.

The smolts were released in October 2024 at Social Security (RM 4) on the Chetco River (action 6.4.4). A small group of coded wired tagged smolts were released in June at Loeb State Park to look at survival rates from an earlier release.

Conservation Plan Progress Summary

Table 3. Summary of progress related to management actions described in the fall Chinook salmon Conservation Plan, as related to the **Rogue Stratum** of the SMU. The "X" symbol means that ODFW completed work on an action that requires annual attention. The "Y" symbol means that ODFW completed the action and that no further work is needed. The "Z" symbol means that ODFW completed work on an allied topic that complemented the action item included in the conservation plan. The "--" symbol means that no ODFW work was completed on the action item during the year.

Action Item	Year of completion for action item											
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Management Stratetgy 4.1												
4.1.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.3	Y											
4.1.4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4.1.9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.10	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
4.1.11	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X
4.1.12	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X
4.1.13	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X
4.1.14	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4.1.16	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.1.17	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Management Strategy 4.2												
4.2.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Management Strategy 4.3												
4.3.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X
4.3.2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Management Strategy 4.4												
4.4.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.4.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4.4.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4.4.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Management Strategy 4.5												
4.5.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.5.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4.5.3	Y											
4.5.4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 4. Summary of progress related to management actions described in the fall Chinook salmon Conservation Plan, as related to the **Coastal Stratum** of the SMU. The "X" symbol means that ODFW completed work on an action that requires annual attention. The "Y" symbol means that ODFW completed the action and that no further work is needed. The "Z" symbol means that ODFW completed work on an allied topic that complemented the action item included in the conservation plan. The "--" symbol means that no ODFW work was completed on the action item during the year.

Action Item	Year of completion for action item											
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Management Stratetgy 6.1												
6.1.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X
6.1.2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.1.3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X	X
6.1.4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X	X
6.1.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X	X
6.1.6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X
6.1.7	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
6.1.8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	--	--	--	--	--
6.1.9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.1.10	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	--	--	X	X	X
6.1.11	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X
6.1.12	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
6.1.13	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
6.1.14	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
6.1.15	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	--
6.1.16	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6.1.17	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Management Strategy 6.2												
6.2.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Management Strategy 6.3												
6.3.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.3.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	X	X	X	X
6.3.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6.3.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	X	X	X	X
6.3.5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.3.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	X	X	X	X
6.3.7	n/a	X	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	X	X	X	X
6.3.8	--	Y										
Management Strategy 6.4												
6.4.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.4.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	X	X	X	X
6.4.3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.4.4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.5.5	Y											
6.6.6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Management Strategy 6.5												
6.5.1	--	--	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y	Y	Y

Rogue Spawning Surveys

In addition to Lower Rogue spawning ground surveys which are used to monitor status metrics, additional supplemental spawning ground surveys were conducted in select reaches within the upper Rogue, middle Rogue, Applegate, and Illinois population areas in 2024.

Fall Chinook were able to disperse up to Applegate Dam in 2024 with a minimum count of more than 27 adults observed spawning in October below the dam. A subsequent survey below the dam in early November found less fish but 50 redds were present. Float surveys on the lower 22 miles of the Applegate had good numbers indicative of a strong return as well with over 1,000 spawners counted on 2 different floats.

Due to measurable late October rain and removal of Pomeroy Dam in 2024, fall Chinook were able to disperse throughout the Illinois River sub-basin with strong numbers counted on the East and West Forks of the Illinois at Forks State Park and fish spawning in Elk Creek in Oregon and California.

Strong numbers of fall Chinook spawners were observed in mainstem Rogue floats around the towns of Rogue River and Grants Pass and the majority of the suitable spawning habitat was used for spawning. For the first time since 1977 ODFW estimated the number of spawning fall Chinook in Bear Creek to compare to historical estimates which were made prior to numerous dams being removed or fish passage being enhanced. The 2024 estimate for Bear Creek was 1,210 spawners compared to the estimate from 1977 which was 70 spawners.

PRE-SEASON FORECASTS

ODFW fishery managers will utilize pre-season forecasts to determine if (1) NP CHF populations might reach conservation criteria and (2) to determine the number of NP CHF that can be harvested in the late-season terminal ocean fishery that operates off the mouths of the Chetco and Winchuck rivers. The efficacy of any annual forecast will, by default, be questionable because of substantial uncertainty in (1) the stock size estimates before the onset of any fishing in spring, (2) the forecasted harvest rates of CHF in the ocean fisheries that operate in federally managed waters, and (3) the forecasted harvest rates in the recreational freshwater fisheries. However, management criteria for each population are based on spawner escapements over multiple (2 or 3) years, which helps buffer the uncertainty associated with the pre-season forecasts.

Preseason Forecasts in Relation to Conservation Criteria

Harvest opportunities in the recreational freshwater fisheries will be constrained to some degree if the pre-season forecasts indicate that NP CHF populations will drop into conservation status. As described in the conservation plan, this situation can be expected in 6-23% of the years, depending on the population in question. Based on the pre-season forecasts for 2024 (Table 6), harvest constraints would be warranted in Hunter Creek. Conservation status or near conservation status for run compensation and run timing (Table 2) for some populations are areas of concern and additional monitoring is recommended as these fisheries continue to build from poor ocean conditions.

Table 6. Forecasted 2025 spawning escapement of age 3-6 NP CHF in relation to conservation status criteria that cover multiple years.

Population(s)	Conservation criterion	Forecasted number of spawners	Conservation status
Rogue Aggregate	20,400[a]	52,019	52,681[a]
Lower Rogue	1,500[c]	1,565	1,827[c]
Chetco	1,440[b]	2,608	3,111[b]
Winchuck	300[b]	435	599[b]
Pistol	540[c]	319	1004c
Hunter	300[c]	184	202[c]

[a]Criterion covers 2024 and 2025 forecasted passage at Huntley Park instead of spawning escapement.
[b]Covers 2024 and 2025 forecast (estimated spawners).
[c]Covers 2023, 2024 and 2025 forecast(estimated spawners).

Preseason Forecasts in Relation to Management of the Chetco Terminal Fishery

The conservation plan outlines that harvest opportunities in the late-season, near-shore, Chetco terminal fishery will be based on the number of estimated spawners needed for maximum sustained yield (Smsy) in population areas proximal to the Chetco River (Action 6.3.5 in Management Strategy 6.3 for the Coastal Stratum). ODFW completed an assessment of the efficacy of pre-season forecasting needs associated with this fishery and because the Smsy estimates pertain to *average* conditions, ODFW concluded that harvest opportunities in the Chetco terminal fishery should be based on a three-year arithmetic mean. ODFW also concluded that management of the Chetco terminal fishery should only be based on the Chetco and Winchuck populations, because the other populations in the SMU contribute to the fishery at very low rates as described in the conservation plan.

Harvest opportunities in the late-season, near-shore Chetco terminal fishery will be constrained to some degree if the pre-season forecasts indicate that NP CHF populations will drop below individual Smsy needs estimated for the Chetco and Winchuck populations of NP CHF. ODFW estimates that this situation can be expected in 40% of the years. The pre-season forecast for spawner numbers in the Winchuck and Chetco Rivers in 2025 does provide an opportunity to harvest NP CHF based on the 3-year average (Table 7).

Table 7. Forecasted 2025 spawning escapement of age 3-6 NP CHF in relation to Smsy estimates for the Chetco and Winchuck populations. For each population, the forecasted number of spawners includes the 2025 forecast and estimated spawner numbers in 2023 and 2024.

Population	S_{msy}	Forecasted number of spawners	Difference
Chetco	2,740	3,955[a]	1,215
Winchuck	560	630[a]	70

[a]Covers 2023 and 2024 (estimated spawners) and 2025 (forecasted spawners).