

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) adopted ocean salmon fishing regulations on April 10, 2018 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 Sacramento River fall Chinook and for Klamath River fall Chinook are below average. As a result of recent low returns, both stocks also meet PFMC definitions that place them in an “overfished” status, which requires the PFMC to begin development of a rebuilding plan. The overall 2018 forecast for Columbia River fall Chinook is 315,500 fish and is lower than the 2017 actual return estimate of 427,700 fish. Coho returns to the Columbia and Oregon coast are forecast to be similar or lower than recent forecasts.

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 commercial troll seasons in two traditional terminal areas for 2018: Elk River and Chetco River. These terminal fisheries are successful at harvesting stocks returning to these locations with little interception of other Chinook stocks. In addition to these areas, the PFMC rules include a repeat of the 2017 allowance of fall state waters fisheries coastwide, shoreward of a 40-fathom contour line, which provides access to Chinook destined for Oregon coastal rivers with reduced risk of intercepting other stocks.

ISSUE 1

OCEAN RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL SALMON FISHERIES

ANALYSIS

Due to the reduced low forecast of Sacramento fall Chinook, the PFMC adopted restrictive ocean troll fisheries off Oregon south of

Cape Falcon. Recreational fisheries in this area harvest far fewer Chinook and are generally less affected by reductions needed to protect Sacramento Chinook.

The forecasts for Columbia Coho are similar to 2017 forecasts, but the forecast for Oregon coast natural Coho is one of the lowest since the 1990s. ESA impact limits and run size for Oregon coast natural Coho were the primary constraint for Oregon recreational seasons south of Cape Falcon.

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

RECOMMENDATION

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

Discussion of 40-fa line approach.

Since 2016, a new approach has been taken for commercial troll fisheries in Oregon. For fall fisheries, the PFMC rules allowed commercial troll fishing from Oct. 1-31 shoreward of a 40-fathom contour line, from Cape Falcon south to Humbug Mt. This approach confined fishing close to shore, in order to focus on Oregon local stocks, while minimizing catch of California stocks of fall Chinook, which are generally found farther off shore. This allowed more fishing area than would be achieved with more traditional “bubble” fisheries. In general, catches during this season have been relatively low, but it did have the intended effect of catching Oregon stocks and avoiding California stocks. This approach will be repeated for the fall season in 2018.

Elk River Ocean Terminal Fishery

The 2018 forecasts for Elk River and Sixes River Chinook are expected to be about the same as recent years.

In 2017, the sport season was November 1-30 with bag limits of one Chinook per day and no more than five per season. The 2017 commercial season was October 15 to November 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 regulations for 2018.

The draft OARs in Attachment 3 reflect no changes to the season structures for this area.

Chetco River Ocean Terminal Fishery

The 2018 forecasts for the Chetco River and Winchuck River Chinook are reduced from recent years. As a result, staff is proposing continuation of a shortened season for the recreational fishery and reduced quota and landing limits for the commercial fishery compared to prior years.

Proposed dates for 2018 are:

- Recreational October 6-7 and 13-14, encompassing two weekends.
- Commercial troll October 15-16 and 25-26, with a five fish per day landing limit.

The draft OARs in Attachment 3 reflect changes to implement the staff recommendations for this area.

OPTIONS

1. Staff Recommendation

Elk

Commercial troll – October 15 to November 30, with a daily Chinook landing and possession limit of 20 per day and a 26-inch minimum length.

Sport – November 1-30, two Chinook per day, but no more than one wild Chinook per day and ten per season.

Chetco

Commercial troll – October 8-12 and 15-31, with a five Chinook daily landing limit, and 28-inch minimum length.

Sport – October 6-7 and 13-14, one Chinook per day ($\geq 28''$), (limit of five wild for the season).

2. No change. 2017 season regulations would be repeated.

**DRAFT
MOTION**

I move to adopt the 2018 regulations for ocean sport and commercial salmon fisheries, and ocean terminal sport and commercial fisheries, as set forth in Attachment 3.

**EFFECTIVE
DATE**

Upon filing.