



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

On April 14, 2021, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) adopted ocean salmon fishing regulations for ocean waters from three to 200 miles off shore (federal jurisdiction). The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will be asked to adopt matching permanent regulations for ocean waters from zero to three miles off shore (state jurisdiction). New federal regulations are expected to be in place effective May 16, 2021. Some Oregon fisheries occur prior to that date and these were established by the 2020 federal rule, and modified by in-season actions taken at the March and April 2021 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.

Returns of Sacramento River Fall Chinook salmon have improved somewhat over the last three years but Klamath River Chinook salmon abundance continues to be low. Because of the continued poor status of Klamath Fall Chinook, this stock was the primary limiting factor in crafting 2021 Chinook fisheries in areas South of Cape Falcon.

The overall 2021 forecast for Columbia River Fall Chinook salmon is 580,800 and is slightly higher than the 2020 actual return estimate of 574,700 fish.

The forecast for Columbia River coho salmon is very high at 1,590,000 fish, compared to the 2020 post-season estimate of 363,600 fish, and would be the highest abundance since 2001. Within the total forecast, ESA-listed wild coho salmon returning to Lower Columbia River tributaries are forecasted at 39,200 fish, which is higher than the 2020 post-season estimate of 37,100 fish, and would be the largest return since 2016.

The 2021 forecast for Oregon Coastal Natural (OCN) coho salmon forecast is 125,000 fish, which is higher than the 2020 post-season estimate of 110,000 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

ODFW held a pre-season public meeting February 25, 2021 with members of the Oregon Salmon Industry Group. The PFMC meetings are open to the public with many opportunities for public testimony throughout the development of preliminary fishery alternatives (March 2021) and the development of final options for commercial and recreational salmon fisheries (April 2021). Public testimony on the three preliminary PFMC season alternatives was also heard at the March 19 Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting. A PFMC Oregon Public Hearing was held on March 24 to discuss salmon fishery options for the area South of Cape Falcon to the OR/CA border. Due to COVID, all meetings have been held virtually, which appears to have expanded the ability of public to attend and provide input.

ISSUE 1

Recreational and commercial ocean salmon fishing seasons

ANALYSIS

The main constraints in planning 2021 Chinook salmon fisheries in areas south of Cape Falcon were meeting PFMC's harvest control rule for natural escapement of Klamath River Fall Chinook salmon. Measures to protect Klamath Fall Chinook also resulted in lower impacts to Sacramento Fall Chinook and ESA-listed California Coastal Chinook, compared to what might otherwise occur.

The forecast for Columbia River coho salmon is very high. This, combined with increases in abundance of Lower Columbia wild coho and OCN coho, has allowed increased recreational coho salmon fishery opportunities South of Cape Falcon compared to recent years. While impacts to OCN coho are usually 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. Actions to provide additional protection for Queets River wild coho (Washington coast) also led to reductions in OCN coho impacts, compared to what might otherwise occur.

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

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