

Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet.

Copies of the EA and other documents cited in this document are available from Dr. Donald O. McIsaac, Executive Director, Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE. Ambassador Place, Suite 200, Portland, OR 97220-1384.

Send comments regarding the reporting burden estimate or any other aspect of the collection-of-information requirements in these management measures, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to one of the NMFS addresses and to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Washington, DC 20503 (ATTN: NOAA Desk Officer).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The ocean salmon fisheries in the EEZ off Washington, Oregon, and California are managed under a "framework" fishery management plan entitled the Pacific Coast Salmon Plan (Salmon FMP). Regulations at 50 CFR part 660, subpart H, provide the mechanism for making preseason and inseason adjustments to the management measures, within limits set by the Salmon FMP, by notification in the **Federal Register**.

These management measures for the 2003 and pre-May 2004 ocean salmon fisheries were recommended by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at its April 7 to 11, 2003, meeting.

Schedule Used To Establish 2003 Management Measures

The Council announced its annual preseason management process for the 2003 ocean salmon fisheries in the **Federal Register** on January 6, 2003 (68 FR 544). This document announced the availability of Council documents as well as the dates and locations of Council meetings and public hearings comprising the Council's complete schedule of events for determining the annual proposed and final modifications to ocean salmon fishery management measures. The agendas for the March and April Council meetings were published in subsequent **Federal Register** documents prior to the actual meetings.

In accordance with the Salmon FMP, the Council's Salmon Technical Team (STT) and staff economist prepared a series of reports for the Council, its advisors, and the public. The first of the reports was prepared in February when

the necessary scientific information first became available. The first report, "Review of 2002 Ocean Salmon Fisheries" (REVIEW), summarizes biological and socio-economic data for the 2002 ocean salmon fisheries and assesses how well the Council's 2002 management objectives were met. The second report, "Preseason Report I Stock Abundance Analysis for 2003 Ocean Salmon Fisheries" (PRE I), provides the 2003 salmon stock abundance projections and analyzes the impacts on the stocks and Council management goals if the 2002 regulations and regulatory procedures were applied to the projected 2003 stock abundances. The completion of PRE I is the initial step in evaluating the full suite of preseason options.

The Council met in Sacramento, CA from March 10 to 14, 2003, to develop 2003 management options for proposal to the public. The Council proposed three options of commercial and recreational fisheries management for analysis and public comment. These options consisted of various combinations of management measures designed to protect weak stocks of coho and chinook salmon and to provide for ocean harvests of more abundant stocks. After the March Council meeting, the Council's STT and staff economist prepared a third report, "Preseason Report II Analysis of Proposed Regulatory Options for 2003 Ocean Salmon Fisheries," which analyzes the effects of the proposed 2003 management options. This report was made available to the Council, its advisors, and the public.

Council public hearings to receive testimony on the proposed options were held on: March 31, 2002, in Westport, WA and Coos Bay, OR; and April 1, 2002, in Eureka, CA. The States of Washington, Oregon, and California sponsored meetings in various forums that also collected public testimony, which was then presented to the Council by each state's Council representative. The Council also received public testimony at both the March and April meetings, and received written comments at the Council office.

The Council met from April 7 to 11, 2003, in Vancouver, WA to adopt its final 2003 recommendations. Following the April Council meeting, the Council's STT and staff economist prepared a fourth report, "Preseason Report III Analysis of Council-Adopted Management Measures for 2003 Ocean Salmon Fisheries," which analyzes the environmental and socio-economic effects of the Council's final recommendations. This report also was made available to the Council, its

advisors, and the public. After the Council took final action on the annual ocean salmon specifications in April, it published the recommended management measures in its newsletter, and also posted them on the Council Web site (www.pcouncil.org).

Resource Status

Since 1989, NMFS has listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) 16 evolutionarily significant units (ESUs) of salmon on the West Coast. As the listings have occurred, NMFS has conducted formal ESA section 7 consultations and issued biological opinions that consider the impacts to listed salmonid species resulting from proposed implementation of the Salmon FMP, or in some cases, from proposed implementation of the annual management measures. Associated with the biological opinions are incidental take statements that specify the level of take that is exempted from the section 9 prohibitions of the ESA. Some of the biological opinions have concluded that implementation of the Salmon FMP is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of certain listed ESUs. Other biological opinions have found that implementation of the Salmon FMP is likely to jeopardize certain listed ESUs and have identified reasonable and prudent alternatives (consultation standards) that would avoid the likelihood of jeopardizing the continued existence of the ESU under consideration. In a March 7, 2003, letter to the Council, NMFS provided the Council with ESA consultation standards and guidance for the management of stocks listed under the ESA in preparation for the 2003 management season in order to ensure that the Council recommendations comply with the ESA.

Estimates of the 2002 spawning escapements for key stocks managed under the Salmon FMP and preseason estimates of 2003 ocean abundance are provided in the Council's REVIEW and PRE I documents. The primary resource and management concerns are for salmon stocks listed under the ESA.

California coastal chinook is listed as a threatened species under the ESA. Coastal chinook spawning populations are not well monitored and no estimate of an ocean exploitation rate is available. NMFS' ESA consultation standard for California coastal chinook requires that the projected annual ocean harvest rate on age-4 Klamath River fall chinook not exceed 0.16. The annual age-4 harvest rate is reported as the landings of age-4 Klamath River fall chinook from September 1 of the previous year through August 31 of the