

50 CFR Part 661

[Docket No. 950426116-5116-01; I.D. 042095A]

RIN 0648-AH79

Ocean Salmon Fisheries Off the Coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California; 1995 Management Measures

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Annual management measures for the ocean salmon fishery; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS establishes fishery management measures for the ocean salmon fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California for 1995. Specific fishery management measures vary by fishery and area. The measures establish fishing areas, seasons, quotas, legal gear, recreational fishing days and catch limits, possession and landing restrictions, and minimum lengths for salmon taken in the exclusive economic zone (3-200 nautical miles) off Washington, Oregon, and California. These management measures are intended to prevent overfishing and to apportion the ocean harvest equitably among treaty Indian and non-treaty commercial and recreational fisheries. The measures are intended to allow a portion of the salmon runs to escape the ocean fisheries to provide for spawning escapement and inside fisheries. NMFS also announces 1996 recreational salmon seasons opening earlier than May 1, 1996.

DATES: Effective from 0001 hours Pacific Daylight Time (P.d.t.), May 1, 1995, until the effective date of the 1996 management measures, as published in the **Federal Register**.

Comments must be received by June 2, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the management measures may be sent to William Stelle, Jr., Director, Northwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way N.E., BIN C15700, Seattle, WA 98115-0070; or Hilda Diaz-Soltero, Director, Southwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213. Documents cited in this notice are available on request.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: William L. Robinson at 206-526-6140, or Rodney R. McInnis at 310-980-4030.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The ocean salmon fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California are managed under a "framework" fishery management plan (FMP). The framework FMP was approved in 1984 and has been amended five times (52 FR 4146, February 10, 1987; 53 FR 30285, August 11, 1988; 54 FR 19185, May 4, 1989; 56 FR 26774, June 11, 1991; 59 FR 23013, May 4, 1994). Regulations at 50 CFR part 661 provide the mechanism for making preseason and inseason adjustments to the management measures, within limits set by the FMP, by notification in the **Federal Register**.

These management measures for the 1995 ocean salmon fisheries were recommended by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at its April 4-7, 1995, meeting.

Schedule Used To Establish 1995 Management Measures

In accordance with the FMP, the Council's Salmon Technical Team (STT) and staff economist prepared several reports for the Council, its advisors, and the public. The first report, "Review of 1994 Ocean Salmon Fisheries," summarizes the 1994 ocean salmon fisheries and assesses how well the Council's management objectives were met in 1994. The second report, "Preseason Report I Stock Abundance Analysis for 1995 Ocean Salmon Fisheries," provides the 1995 salmon stock abundance projections and analyzes the impacts on the stocks and Council management goals if the 1994 regulations or regulatory procedures were applied to the 1995 stock abundances.

The Council met on March 7-10, 1995, in South San Francisco, CA, to develop proposed management options for 1995. Three commercial and three recreational fishery management options were proposed for analysis and public comment. These options presented various combinations of management measures designed to protect numerous weak stocks of coho and chinook salmon and provide for ocean harvests of more abundant stocks. All options provided for no directed harvest of chinook salmon in non-treaty fisheries north of Cape Falcon, OR, and no directed harvest of coho salmon south of Cape Falcon. After the March Council meeting, the STT and staff economist prepared a third report, "Preseason Report II Analysis of Proposed Regulatory Options for 1995 Ocean Salmon Fisheries," which analyzes the effects of the proposed 1995 management options. This report

also was distributed to the Council, its advisors, and the public.

Public hearings on the proposed options were held March 27-29, 1995, in Westport, WA; Astoria and North Bend, OR; and Eureka and Sacramento, CA.

The Council met on April 4-7, 1995, in Portland, OR, to adopt its final 1995 recommendations. Following the April Council meeting, the STT and staff economist prepared a fourth report, "Preseason Report III Analysis of Council-Adopted Management Measures for 1995 Ocean Salmon Fisheries," which analyzes the environmental and socio-economic effects of the Council's final recommendations. This report also was distributed to the Council, its advisors, and the public.

Resource Status

Many salmon runs returning to Washington, Oregon, and California streams in 1995 are expected to be somewhat improved from the record low levels in 1994.

Aside from salmon species listed under the Endangered Species Act (discussed below), the primary resource concerns are for: Klamath River fall chinook; Columbia River hatchery chinook; Oregon Production Index area coho stocks destined for the Columbia River and the California and Oregon coasts, particularly Oregon coastal natural coho; and Washington coastal and Puget Sound natural coho. (The Oregon Production Index (OPI) is an annual index of coho abundance from Leadbetter Point, Washington, south through California). Management of all of these stocks is affected by interjurisdictional agreements among Tribal, State, Federal, and/or Canadian managers.

Chinook Salmon Stocks

California Central Valley stocks are relatively abundant compared to the other chinook stocks of the Pacific coast. The Central Valley Index of abundance of combined Central Valley chinook stocks is estimated to be 654,000 fish for 1995, 13 percent above the postseason estimate of the index for 1994 and 7 percent above the average of the index from 1970-1994. The spawning escapement of Sacramento River adult fall chinook was 141,700 adults in 1994, 11 percent greater than the 1993 escapement and within the spawning escapement goal range of 122,000 to 180,000 adult spawners.

Winter-run chinook from the Sacramento River are listed under the ESA as an endangered species (59 FR 440, January 4, 1994) and are a