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National Marine Fisheries Service Accepts Pacific Council's Salmon Recommendations

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) today announced that it was approving an emergency rule to allow some limited salmon fishing along the Oregon and California coasts. These new regulations will allow the ocean salmon fishery to open as scheduled on May 1. They mirror the recommendations made earlier this month by the Pacific Fishery Management Council in an effort to protect dwindling numbers of Chinook salmon returning to the Klamath River to spawn.

The Pacific Council's Salmon Fishery Management Plan requires the Council and NOAA Fisheries to maintain long term productivity of the salmon stocks. The existing plan requires a fishery closure if the number of returning Klamath River fall Chinook falls below 35,000. NOAA scientists had predicted only 25,000 will return this year. After reviewing the data and in collaboration with NOAA Fisheries, the states, tribes and fishermen, the Council determined that conditions this year allowed for the plan to be temporarily be set at 21,000 without compromising the long-term productivity of the stock. The Council set the reduced number based on scientific models and numerous risk assessment factors.

"NOAA Fisheries commends the Council for developing scientifically-sound recommendations to preserve salmon, while also allowing limited recreational, tribal, and commercial salmon harvest opportunities for fishermen in this difficult year," said William T. Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries. "This decision is important to our efforts to help rebuild and improve conditions for Klamath Chinook salmon for the long-term."

"The Council process that led to this solution involved state, private, and federal interests, and they reached agreement on the science, and they respected tribal rights," said Hogarth. "This is a powerful way to solve resource problems, and we hope to build upon this collaboration as we move forward in addressing issues in the Klamath."

NOAA Fisheries approval of the Council-adopted fishing regime will result in an estimated 21,000 natural adult salmon spawners in the Klamath River after the allowed commercial and recreational harvests. It will also provide for a catch of other salmon in ocean recreational and commercial fisheries. In addition, extra risk reduction measures,

such as trip limits, will be put in place. There have been thirteen years where escapement has been significantly below the floor required by the Pacific Fishery Management Plan. During each of those, the stock rebounded to more than 35,000.

This rule will allow about 40 percent of the usual commercial salmon harvest this year. The average landed value of salmon caught in commercial harvest in recent years has been about \$12 million a year in California and \$7 million in Oregon. Since 2000, commercial harvests on the West Coast have averaged over 700,000 Chinook annually, with coho commercial harvests averaging about 45,000 fish.

Rod McInnis, Director of NOAA Fisheries Southwest Region, added, "We are acutely aware of the impact this rule has on fisherman and coastal communities, but feel this is a necessary step to ensure the long-term health of the salmon fishery. My staff has been working on an economic analysis to specifically quantify the impact on the fishing season."

The regulations, which will be published in the *Federal Register*, can be found at: www.nwr.noaa.gov. More information regarding the Council's recommendation and process can be found at: <http://www.pcouncil.org>.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, 61 countries and the European Commission to develop a global network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

- 30 -

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA's National Fisheries Services: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>