

Federal Panel Adopts Options for Ocean Salmon Sport Fisheries

Local News

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WESTPORT, Wash. - Anglers fishing along the Washington coast will likely see a higher catch quota for chinook salmon this year, while the quota for coho is expected to be similar to last season, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) announced today. Three ocean salmon-fishing options approved today by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) anticipate an abundance of chinook in the ocean, but a down year for Columbia River hatchery coho salmon. The PFMC establishes fishing seasons in ocean waters three to 200 miles off the Pacific coast. The three options establish a framework for developing fishing opportunities on healthy wild and hatchery stocks while meeting conservation goals for weak salmon populations, said Phil Anderson, WDFW director. Chinook salmon abundance in the ocean is expected to look much like it did last season, when we had a strong return to the Columbia River, the challenge this year will be to ensure we meet our conservation goals for coho while still providing a full season of meaningful fishing opportunities in the ocean. - Phil Anderson, WDFW Director Anderson, who represents WDFW on the management council, said two of the options include recreational mark-selective fisheries for hatchery chinook that would begin in mid-June. If implemented, mark-selective fisheries for hatchery chinook would open ahead of the traditional recreational fishing season for the third straight year. ***The Washington Trollers Association is inviting all persons interested in salmon trolling off of the WA Coast to a port meeting at 7 PM on Friday, March 23 at the Westport Ferry Office (located behind the Westport Fuel Office) to discuss the best options for Washington Salmon Trollers. There is also a hearing in Westport before PFMC council members on March 26 to receive public comments on the proposed options for the 2012 ocean salmon troll and recreational season. The Westport PFMC hearing is scheduled for 7 PM at the Chateau Westport.***

Mark-selective fisheries allow anglers to catch and keep abundant hatchery salmon, which are marked with a missing adipose fin, but require that they release wild salmon. About 651,000 fall chinook are expected to return to the Columbia River this season, a run size similar to the last couple year's returns. A significant portion of that run - nearly 191,000 - is expected to be lower river hatchery chinook, which traditionally have been the backbone of the recreational ocean chinook fishery. An estimated 317,000 coho also are expected to return to the Columbia River this year, about 45,000 fish below last year's projection. Columbia River coho also account for a significant portion of the ocean catch. The PFMC is expected to approve final harvest guidelines for this year's recreational ocean fishery in early April. The three options announced today establish parameters for state and tribal fishery managers in designing this year's fishing seasons. The recreational fishing options are: Option 1 - 51,500 chinook and 71,400 coho; Option 2 - 45,500 chinook and 63,000 coho; and Option 3 - 35,500 chinook and 54,600 coho. The PFMC last year adopted recreational ocean fishing quotas of 33,700 chinook and 67,200 coho salmon. Under each option for this year, the ocean recreational fishery would vary: Option 1: The recreational salmon fishing season would begin with a mark-selective fishery for hatchery chinook June 9 in Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco), and June 16 in marine areas 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores), 3 (LaPush) and 4 (Neah Bay). The selective fishery in marine

area 1 would run through June 22, while the fishery in marine areas 2, 3 and 4 would run through June 30. In all areas, the fishery would be open seven days a week with a daily limit of two salmon, not including coho and wild chinook which must be released. The fishery could close earlier if a coastwide quota of 8,000 hatchery chinook is reached. The traditional recreational salmon season for chinook and hatchery coho would begin June 23 in Marine Area 1, and July 1 in the three other coastal areas. Anglers would have a daily limit of two salmon in marine areas 3 and 4. Those fishing marine areas 1 and 2 would also have a two-salmon daily limit, but could keep only one chinook. In all areas, the fishery would be open daily.

Option 2: The recreational salmon fishing season would begin June 16 with a mark-selective fishery for hatchery chinook in all ocean areas. The fishery would be open seven days a week, with a daily limit of two salmon, through June 22 in Marine Area 1 and through June 23 in marine areas 2, 3 and 4. The fishery could close earlier if a coastwide quota of 6,000 hatchery chinook is reached. The recreational salmon season would then open for chinook and hatchery coho June 23 in Marine Area 1 and June 24 in marine areas 2, 3 and 4. Marine areas 1, 3 and 4 would be open seven days a week, while Marine Area 2 would be open Sunday through Thursday. Anglers fishing all four marine areas would be allowed to retain one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit.

Option 3: The recreational salmon fishing season for chinook and hatchery coho would be open from July 3 through Sept. 23 on a Tuesday-through-Saturday schedule in marine areas 3 and 4. In Marine Area 2, the season would be open from July 1 through Sept. 23 on a Sunday-through-Thursday schedule. In Marine Area 1, recreational salmon fishing would be open seven days a week from June 30 through Sept. 30. All four marine areas would have a daily limit of two salmon, only one of which could be a chinook.

More details on these ocean options will be available on PFMC's website at www.pcouncil.org/ . A public hearing on the three options for ocean salmon fisheries is scheduled for March 26 in Westport. Chinook and coho quotas approved by the PFMC will be part of a comprehensive 2012 salmon fishing package, which includes marine and freshwater fisheries throughout Puget Sound, the Columbia River and Washington's coastal areas. State and tribal co-managers are currently developing those fisheries. The co-managers will complete the final 2012 salmon fisheries package in conjunction with the PFMC process during its April meeting. Meanwhile, several public meetings are scheduled in March to discuss regional fisheries issues. A schedule of public meetings, as well as salmon run-size forecasts and more information about the salmon-season setting process, can be found on WDFW's North of Falcon website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/northfalcon/> .