



Pacific Fishery Management Council *NEWS RELEASE*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Dr. Donald McIsaac, Executive Director, 503-820-2280
Ms. Jennifer Gilden, Communications Officer, 503-820-2280

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL VOTES TO ALLOW LOWEST EVER 2006 SALMON FISHERIES OFF CALIFORNIA AND OREGON

At its meeting in Sacramento this week, the Pacific Fishery Management Council voted to allow limited commercial, recreational and tribal ocean salmon fisheries off the coast of California and Oregon this year. Prior to the decision, the Council had considered a complete closure of all salmon fisheries in this area due to low numbers of naturally spawning Klamath River fall Chinook salmon, which swim with healthier stock along a 700-mile stretch of the Oregon and California coast. The decision has been forwarded to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for final approval.

The Council heard compelling testimony from over 100 of the estimated 1,000 people that attended the public meeting where the decision was made. After describing her family fishing history, Barbara Stickel of Morrow Bay tearfully said, "Only a few Klamath fish will be accidentally taken. I need some sort of meaningful salmon fishery." Over 5,000 pieces of written comment were also received. Testimony was also received from representatives of Indian Tribes, coastal communities, ports, and Congressional offices. Troy Fletcher, a Yurok Indian, called for, "not a blue ribbon committee, but a blue collar committee, to work together to fix the Klamath River."

Mike Rees from Salmon Trollers Marketing Association presented a petition with over 7,200 signatures asking for a fishery targeting Sacramento River Chinook salmon.

“Sometimes you have to go past the numbers that say no and do the right thing for the whole and say yes,” said Tom Creedon from Fisherman’s Wharf in San Francisco.

The Council’s fishery management plan calls for at least 35,000 mature fall Chinook to spawn naturally in the Klamath River. However, less than 35,000 spawners were counted the past two years and only 25,000 spawners were expected this year even with a total closure of salmon fisheries where Klamath Chinook are found in the ocean. The Council’s decision to allow limited fishing will result in an estimated 21,000 natural spawners in the Klamath River, to provide for a catch of over 200,000 salmon in ocean recreational and commercial fisheries.

The Council’s decision was justified in part by the fact that in the past, low numbers of returning Klamath spawners have produced high enough numbers to maintain strong runs in the future. For example, a spawning level of 18,500 in 1999 produced 196,000 salmon. However, in 1990, 16,000 spawners produced only 45,000 adult fish. The average number of natural Klamath River spawners during the past 10 years has been 55,400. Klamath River naturally spawning Chinook salmon are not listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The Council recommended use of an emergency rule to allow the fisheries to remain open. A complete closure would have meant millions in lost economic activity for recreational and commercial salmon fisheries, as well as a lack of local wild salmon in stores and restaurants. These salmon fisheries have averaged \$133 million dollars per year in economic impacts to coastal and inland communities. “Even a low season is as devastating as a hurricane to us,” said Steven Kingsley of San Francisco, California.

“But we need at least a small season to survive.” NMFS and the States of Oregon and California have discussed ways to bring federal disaster relief to salmon fishing businesses.

The season allows some commercial fishing around Newport, Oregon during June, July, September, and October. In California, there will be a limited season in September for Fort Bragg; in July, August, and September in San Francisco; and in May, July, August, and September in Monterey. Sport fisheries will be allowed most months in Oregon and California, but there will be closures.

Details of the salmon season structure will be posted on the Council website shortly.

In-river habitat factors are thought to be primarily responsible for the diminished Klamath returns the past few years. Drought, irrigation withdrawals, and dams have been blamed for raising river water temperatures, reducing or eliminating spring floods that rush fish to the sea, and creating conditions for parasite infestations. In 2002, 30,000 or more adult Chinook salmon in the lower Klamath River were killed by a combination of environmental factors including low river flows. Parent year spawners were well above the 35,000 goal and recent seasons have been greatly restricted, indicating overfishing has not been a factor. Nearby ocean conditions during the past two summers may have been poor for Klamath fish. Current rains in the Klamath River are ending a multi-year drought.

For more information, please see:

- Klamath salmon online press packet:
http://www.pcouncil.org/newsreleases/sal06_presspacket.html

- Press release on letter call for Klamath dam removal:
http://www.pcouncil.org/newsreleases/pr040706_krd.pdf
- Other Council correspondence on Klamath flows:
<http://www.pcouncil.org/habitat/habdocs.html>
- Guide to the Pacific Fishery Management Council process:
<http://www.pcouncil.org/guide/Guide-intropage.html>