

Oregon ocean salmon fisheries affected by California's low forecasted returns

March 14, 2023



With severely low forecasted returns of California chinook salmon (Sacramento and Klamath River), both California and Oregon ocean chinook commercial and recreational fisheries are impacted. Coho are a bright spot again for Oregon, and the state is expecting another good run and fishing seasons like last year.

Last week, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) cancelled the spring 2023 commercial ocean troll salmon fishery (Cape Falcon to the California border) and the spring recreational ocean salmon fishery (March 15-May 15 from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain). This decision was made in consultation with the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC), and the states of Oregon and California.

ODFW's ocean salmon project leader Eric Schindler says with California salmon forecasts so low, impacts to those critical chinook stocks need to be kept low.

“Chinook headed for California are caught along with local chinook and coho in Oregon's ocean fisheries south of Cape Falcon. So, any fishery where these chinook are likely to be caught must be restricted – that's

why Oregon and California agreed with NMFS and cancelled all early ocean salmon seasons south of Cape Falcon at least through May 15,” Schindler said.

The PFMC currently is developing summer salmon seasons to be decided by April 7. Those decisions will be sent to the U.S. Department of Commerce for final approval by May 15.

PFMC is considering several alternatives for summer and fall salmon seasons. Generally, these would allow coho fishing from mid-June through September but restrict chinook fishing south of Cape Falcon until at least Sept. 1. By then, the majority of chinook headed to California are no longer offshore of Oregon’s coast. In September, there is still potential to harvest Oregon chinook salmon.

A different mix of salmon stocks are offshore north of Cape Falcon, so season alternatives are different. Options being considered would allow recreational chinook and coho retention in the ocean beginning mid-June through September.

PFMC’s alternatives are available online and more information is in the PFMC’s news release. The PFMC is looking for feedback from anglers and commercial fishermen which have their own season. Going through the PFMC e-portal is the best way to comment; use the link for Salmon Agenda Item E.2 (tentative adoption of the 2023 management measures for analysis) scheduled for the Council floor on Sunday, April 2.

PFMC is hosting an in-person public meeting March 20, 7-9 p.m. in North Bend. ODFW staff will attend and be available to answer questions.