

Comments for Agenda item E.5 PFMC 4/9/2024 meeting

Good Afternoon Council Members,

I would like thank the council and SAS for the hard work that went into this years salmon planning process.

It is not an easy task to consider dividing a small harvestable surplus. I empathize with uncomfortable position that the commercial representatives face when offering opportunity to one sector while advocating for closure in another. Sadly in this case it seemed to lead to the unnecessary demonization of recreational sportfishers.

I agree It would be irresponsible to approach this season with the prior methods and tools. The models (preseason abundance vs post season harvest) have shown no ability to limit the commercial overperformance. The new reporting requirements will address that.

The overperformance of the rec sector has not historically been an issue, maybe 1 or 2 incidences.

The principal argument put forth by the unified block of commercial fishers, processors and CPFV operators that there is not enough surplus for a season may hold true for them in a strictly economic analysis but it does provide some opportunity for a limited recreational season. Many have spoken to their or their loved ones last chance to catch a salmon, some for the first opportunity. A single fish caught by a recreational fisherman can have dramatic effect on health and well being. It is not just the act of catching but the preparation, preoccupation, the day dreaming and speculation that fuels hours of research, boat maintenance, gear purchases, and hopefully that successful trip that yield the prize.

Our membership was motivated to respond to this uniform message with a simple, fact based argument. It is perhaps why the consistency of the comments was attributed to form letters. This was not the case. I was the author of the letter to our members encouraging them to comment in support of season alternative 1 and providing them with an analysis of the argument for closure as well as several suggested points of contention. Members were encouraged to include personal reasons for why fishing is important to them as well as use language to counter the argument against fishing.

There were no form letters.

I would argue the commercial block underestimated the public's desire to access the resource in a sustainable and responsible way.

CDFW had committed to inseason management that allows for ongoing evaluation. There is a real possibility that the season could be over in the first few days. Or that entire period could be shut down by weather. There are many unknowns going into this new arrangement.

In the true spirit of compromise I don't think anyone is happy with the options but the council has a duty as outlined in the Magnuson Steven act to manage the resource for harvest (specifically MSY). The duty is to conservation and not preservation.

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We, at Coastside Fishing Club, worked hard to communicate and educate members, not only of the situation and considerations that go into the salmon season planning process, but also in the value of participation and the ability to impact the decision making process. Many of our more seasoned members do not share the same naïve optimism.

The futility of participation echoed by those who have been involved for years is simply reinforced by the CDFW's inconsistent messaging.

The breakneck pace of change in the development of this year's alternatives would defy even the most imaginative screen writer.

How we went from the CDFW's proffered short openers with inseason management to not enough fish for Californians to access in the time between the 3/25 informational meeting to the 4/5 PFMC session with no indication is not reassuring.

The CDFW's departure from the guidance for additional escapement and election to forgoe a California season on a harvestable surplus while not objecting to an equal take of SI fish in Oregon's waters is offensive to CA rec anglers.

If, in CDFW's opinion, the case is so dire that the NMFS guidance isn't sufficient and no fishing under any circumstance is to be allowed, I would expect CDFW to hold the same sentiment regardless of where the SI fish are caught.

If CDFW is committed to denying CA rec anglers the opportunity to fish then I would ask they oppose any and all SI fish being taken anywhere.

Without raising this objection there is no possible claim of fairness or equity. It certainly diminishes the measure optimum yield which should heavily consider social and economic factors weighed against conservation directives.

I would ask that the alternative 1 option be reinstated, complete with the knowledge that it may in fact turn out to be a 1 weekend opener. Although that is unlikely given the previous maximum take was around 40k fish in the month of July (this was mentioned in council proceeding the other day), it does remain a possibility.

Just as the SAS was reminded that they have an obligation to the process of determining salmon seasons I would remind CDFW that their obligation is to manage stock for use and access, not preservation.