

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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Pacific Salmon Treaty: Chinook Salmon Fishery Mitigation Program

Background:

Chinook salmon fisheries in Southeast Alaska generate income, provide recreation and are valuable sources of nutrition. The annual harvest level of Chinook salmon in Southeast Alaska is set under provisions of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (treaty), an agreement between the United States and Canada that addresses conservation and allocation of salmon stocks that migrate across the international boundary and are harvested in the fisheries of both nations. Salmon that spawn in one country but may be harvested in both countries are a shared resource that implicates the interests of both nations.

Renegotiations of the Chinook fishery provisions of the treaty which set harvest levels for Southeast Alaska (SEAK) and Canadian Chinook fisheries off the West Coast of Vancouver Island (WCVI), as well as harvest provisions for Chinook fisheries in the Pacific Northwest, were completed in 2008. Reaching coastwide agreement on Chinook was very difficult due to the wide migratory range of stocks and the variability in their status. Many stocks are healthy, but others are depressed and many originating in the Pacific Northwest are listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). The principle factors addressed in the negotiations included the large number of salmon stocks in the Pacific Northwest that are listed under the Endangered Species Act; the impact of the Canadian WCVI Chinook fishery on the listed U.S. Chinook stocks; the much lesser impact on listed stocks by the SEAK Chinook fishery; the harvest in Southeast Alaska of Chinook originating in Canada and the Pacific Northwest; and the historic dependence of coastal communities on the Chinook salmon fisheries. The final agreement reduced the Canadian WCVI Chinook fishery 30% to address ESA related conservation concerns, and reduced the SEAK Chinook fishery 15% to address harvest sharing and conservation issues asserted by Canada. The agreement formed the basis for securing the required section 7 incidental take permit under the ESA for conduct of the Southeast Alaska Chinook fisheries.

To secure the 30% reduction in the Canadian fishery, the United States included in the agreement a commitment to provide \$30 million (in two installments of \$15 million to be completed by 2011) for mitigation of the economic consequences of the agreement. U.S. negotiators agreed that \$30 million should also be sought for mitigation of the economic consequences of the harvest reductions in Southeast Alaska and \$30 for a program to address critical Chinook stocks in the Pacific Northwest. The Alaska

Congressional Delegation supports funding of \$30 million for the mitigation program, and the Governors of Alaska, Washington and Oregon signed a joint letter to the Secretaries of the Departments of State and Commerce endorsing the recommendations of the negotiators and encouraging the federal agencies to include funding in budget requests for fiscal year 2010.

The President's budget proposal for the Department of Commerce for federal fiscal year 2010 (FFY 2010) includes \$7.5 million for Alaska's mitigation program and \$7.5 million for the Pacific Northwest Critical Stocks program. The bill passed by the House appropriations subcommittee for the Department of Commerce echoed the president's request. The Senate appropriations subcommittee report includes \$4.5 million for each program for FFY 2010. While not yet finalized it is likely that the Congress will provide significant funding for the Alaska mitigation program in the FFY 2010 budget, and there may be additional increments of funds for the program in future years.

The following outlines the process to be utilized to identify uses and distribution of the mitigation funds to benefit those most directly affected by the economic impacts of the Chinook harvest reductions in Southeast Alaska.

Mitigation Funding Process:

Goals:

Offset, to the extent that funding allows, the lost revenues from reductions in the directed sport and commercial harvest of Chinook salmon resulting from the 2008 Pacific Salmon Treaty agreement.

Foster understanding of affected constituencies regarding the program and the specific means employed to address the economic consequences to sport and commercial fisheries from the reductions in Chinook harvest levels.

Process:

- 1) A stakeholder group will be empanelled to identify actions that would provide economic benefits to offset the losses caused by the agreement.

8 seats

3 Sport (two charter and one resident angler),

3 Troll,

1 Processor,

2 Community representatives;

1 nominated by Southeast Conference

1 nominated by the Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

The panel will:

- Develop a prioritized list of mitigation measures
- Describe likely benefits and intended beneficiaries of each of the recommended actions
- Recommend a sequence for mitigation actions in anticipation that funding may be appropriated over a period of years.

- 2) Staff support: (including but not limited to)
 - Department of Fish and Game (enhancement and management)
 - Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (grant programs, marketing)
 - Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Staff will provide background materials and help develop options for implementing the panel recommendations.

- 3) Governor's Fisheries Sub-Cabinet Oversight

The Fisheries Sub-Cabinet (ADFG, DCCED, DLWD, and DEC) will review Stakeholder recommendations and staff analysis of mitigation options and make final decisions.

Implementation Schedule:

- Initial funding secured in the pending FFY 2010 budget would be appropriated by the Alaska Legislature in the spring of 2010 and available for expenditure after completion of the state budget process (likely after July 1, 2010)
- Stakeholder panel recommendations should be prepared before January 15, 2010 and final decisions reached by February 15 to enable coordination with the legislature.
- We anticipate that at the time the initial increment of funding is available Congress will be considering a second increment of mitigation funds.

We anticipate three meetings of the stakeholder panel may be necessary:

- 1) An initial organizational meeting / teleconference in November to describe the scope of the panel's work, identify a preliminary set of options and identify information needs.
- 2) A face-to-face meeting in December to discuss the options and identify any further staff analysis.
- 3) A final face-to-face meeting in January to generate a set of recommendations.