



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
Sustainable Fisheries Division
510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 103
Lacey WA, 98503

June 24, 2016

Mr. Jim Unsworth, Director
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, Washington 98501

Honorable Lorraine Loomis, Chair
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
6730 Martin Way East
Olympia, Washington 98516

Dear Chair Loomis and Director Unsworth:

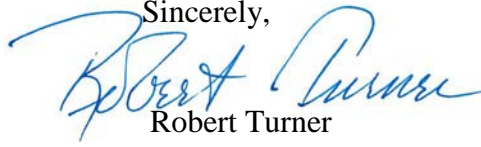
This letter transmits the biological opinion issued under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) essential fish habitat (EFH) consultation prepared by NOAA Fisheries on the co-managers' fishery plan for Puget Sound salmon and steelhead fisheries, including U.S. Fraser Panel fisheries occurring from May 1, 2016 through April 30, 2017. This biological opinion evaluates the impacts of the fisheries on the Puget Sound Chinook Salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU), the Puget Sound Steelhead Distinct Population Segment (DPS), the Southern Resident killer whale DPS and the three Puget Sound/Georgia Basin rockfish DPS's listed under the ESA. Other listed species occurring in the action area are either covered under existing, long-term ESA opinions or 4(d) determinations, or NMFS anticipates the proposed actions are not likely to affect the species. The opinion expires April 30, 2017. The 2015 fishery performance assessment and other supplemental information provided to NOAA Fisheries by the tribes and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) was valuable in helping us better understand the proposed fishing plan, address critical areas of uncertainty, and improve our analysis.

NOAA Fisheries concluded in the biological opinion that the fisheries, if conducted consistent with the terms of the incidental take statement, are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species that are subject of the opinion, or to destroy or to adversely modify critical habitat. Our conclusion for Puget Sound Chinook salmon is predicated in part on the co-managers implementing measures to assure that fisheries will remain within exploitation rate ceilings and the completion of a revised long-term transitional strategy for the Nisqually Chinook population (Unsworth and Grayum 2016, Adicks 2016). We have included these tasks as terms and conditions in the Incidental Take Statement of the biological opinion (section 2.8.4). The terms and conditions are non-discretionary.

The analysis supporting our conclusion and the terms and conditions are described in sections 2.4 and 2.8 of the attached biological opinion. My staff will assist in whatever way they can to complete the required work. Please let Susan Bishop (susan.bishop@noaa.gov) know if you have any questions. I look forward to our continued collaboration.



Sincerely,



Robert Turner
Assistant Regional Administrator
Sustainable Fisheries Division

Cc:

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