



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

ISSUE

2026 Recreational and Commercial Ocean Salmon Fishing Seasons

BACKGROUND

This agenda item requests Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) adoption of administrative rules for the 2026 Ocean Salmon Fisheries within state waters.

On April 12, 2026, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) will adopt ocean salmon fishing regulations for ocean waters from three to 200 nautical miles offshore (federal jurisdiction). Ocean salmon seasons developed by the PFMC are structured to address conservation and management objectives, as well as Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements for various Chinook and coho salmon stocks. New federal regulations are expected to be in place effective May 16, 2026, when officially adopted by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. The Commission will be asked to adopt matching permanent regulations for ocean waters from zero to three nautical miles offshore (state jurisdiction).

Ocean commercial and recreational salmon fisheries off Oregon's coast are managed in four primary zones including: 1) the area from the OR/WA border south to Cape Falcon, near Manzanita, 2) Cape Falcon south to Heceta Bank, near Florence, 3) Heceta Bank south to Humbug Mountain near Port Orford, and 4) Humbug Mountain south to the OR/CA border. Commercial and recreational ocean salmon fisheries are important to Oregon's economy. During the 2025 management period, which was restricted, the commercial troll fishery along the Oregon coast landed 400,556 pounds of salmon with an ex-vessel value of \$3.53 million. The economic impact of recreational ocean salmon fisheries depends primarily on the number of open days. Last year, there were 89,455 recreational angler trips, which was higher than 2024 (77,369 trips). A total of 5,689 Chinook salmon and 73,081 coho salmon were landed by recreational fishers in 2025.

The PFMC salmon fisheries are managed to protect weak stocks from fishery impacts. Intensive fishery shaping and planning is required to optimize fishing opportunity for healthy stocks, while protecting the weaker stocks. Harvest is scaled to abundance so that fishing rates are reduced when stock abundances are low. Thus, changes from year to year are the norm, and the magnitude of those changes can be dramatic.

Fisheries south of Cape Falcon

This year, the primary limiting Chinook stock for fisheries south of Cape Falcon is from the Klamath River. This stock migrates along the Oregon coast and is caught in Oregon recreational and commercial troll fisheries. The stock has experienced low escapement in recent years primarily due to over-prediction of abundance and under-prediction of fishing effort, poor in-river environmental conditions, and poor juvenile survival. The forecast for 2026 Klamath River Fall Chinook is over twice the 2025 forecast and consistent with the 10-year average forecast, meaning that this stock is not a limiting factor for 2026 fisheries. However, the age-4 ocean

harvest rate for the KRFC stock is also used to estimate fishery impacts on ESA-listed California Coastal Chinook salmon. For 2026, the maximum allowed harvest rate for age-4 Klamath River fall Chinook is 8.6%, and is the main limiting factor in shaping fisheries this year south of Cape Falcon. Fisheries were designed to reduce interceptions of this stock and focus on more local stocks, including coho salmon.

Fisheries north of Cape Falcon

The 2026 salmon fisheries off the north Oregon coast and in the lower Columbia River are constrained by the pre-season forecasts for Columbia River Natural Tule Chinook and Lower Columbia River Natural (LCN) coho salmon. Fisheries in 2026 will be managed to not exceed total exploitation rates of 41 percent and 23 percent, respectively.

The 2026 ocean-abundance forecast for Columbia River coho salmon is 519,300 fish which is slightly higher than last year's forecast but lower than the estimated return of 619,300 fish. Within the total forecast, ESA-listed wild coho salmon returning to Lower Columbia River tributaries are forecasted at 101,800 fish, which is higher than the 2025 post-season estimate of 61,600 fish.

The 2026 forecast for Oregon Coastal Natural (OCN) coho salmon of 218,600 fish is higher than the 2025 post-season estimated return of 149,300 fish. The allowed exploitation rate for OCN coho in 2026 is the same as last year at 30 percent due to moderate ocean survival and high parental escapement. This ESA-listed stock is usually the primary limiting factor in constructing coho fisheries in Oregon areas south of Cape Falcon.

For threatened Southern Oregon/Northern Coastal California coho, all stock components are at or below their respective exploitation rate ceilings of 15-16%.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The following opportunities for public comment were provided:

- The Department held a pre-season public meeting on February 27, 2026, in Newport.
- The PFMC meetings are open to the public with many opportunities for public testimony throughout the development of preliminary (March 2026) fishery management alternatives and final (April 2026) season measures for commercial and recreational salmon fisheries.
- A PFMC Oregon public hearing was held in Newport on March 24 to discuss salmon fishery options for the marine Columbia River area and the marine management areas from south of Cape Falcon to the OR/CA border. All meetings have been held in a hybrid format providing for in-person as well as virtual participation, which appears to have expanded the ability of the public to attend and provide input.

In anticipation of the Commission consideration of the proposed rules, the department published notice of the proposed rulemaking (Attachment 2).

Additionally, the public has an opportunity to provide comments prior to (in writing) or (orally) during the hearing that occurs at the Commission meeting.

ANALYSIS

Details of the analyses associated with season structures and quotas adopted by the PFMC for commercial, recreational, and tribal ocean salmon fisheries are contained in the Pre-season Report III, which is scheduled to be released by the PFMC's Salmon Technical Team by late April 2026.

Chinook Salmon

Although forecasts for many Chinook stocks are similar to, or improved from 2025, the maximum harvest rate for age-4 Klamath River fall Chinook salmon limited the development of fisheries off the Oregon Coast. Therefore, opportunity for Chinook harvest, especially in the commercial troll fishery which primarily targets Chinook salmon, will be constrained during the late summer months. When compared to the 2025 season, recreational and troll opportunities for Chinook salmon off Oregon are improved.

Coho Salmon

NOTE: Numbers in this section will be updated following the April 12 PFMC meeting

Opportunities for coho salmon in 2026 are similar to last year. Recreational fisheries will have meaningful opportunity for hatchery coho with a **XXXX** quota during the summer and a non-mark selective fishery with a **XXX** quota in September. Similar to last year, some coho harvest opportunity is available for troll fisheries with a **XXX** quota in September. The final exploitation rate estimates for LCN, OCN, and SONCC coho in 2026 fisheries are **XX**, **XX**, and **XX**, respectively, which meet the management measures for these stocks.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt staff recommendations as reflected in draft OARs in Attachment 3.
2. Modify staff recommendation for one or more items.
3. Status quo.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Option 1. Adopt staff recommendations as reflected in draft OARs in Attachment 3.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to amend OAR 635 Divisions 003 and 013 as proposed by staff in Attachment 3.

Effective Date: *Upon Filing*