



## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

### ISSUE 1

#### 2026 Proposed Oregon Coastal Wild Fall Chinook Salmon Angling Regulations

#### BACKGROUND

The Commission is being asked to adopt fishing regulations for 2026 Oregon Coastal wild fall Chinook salmon.

The State's Wildlife Policy ORS 496.012 (which includes fish) provides that "wildlife shall be managed to prevent serious depletion of any indigenous species and to provide the optimum recreational and aesthetic benefits for present and future generations of the citizens of this state." ODFW annually evaluates available information regarding the supply and condition of fish and determines the appropriate level and means of harvest for each species.

Management of fisheries for wild fall Chinook salmon in Oregon coastal rivers is governed by applicable rules and guided by ODFW conservation plans, specifically the *Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan* (CMP) for coastal streams from the Elk River northward and the *Rogue Fall Chinook Conservation Plan* (RFCP) for rivers south of the Elk River.

The CMP established a tiered sliding scale harvest approach for managing wild Chinook salmon fisheries by geographic units (North Coast, Mid-Coast, Umpqua, Mid-South Coast), such that based upon the prior year's return and the current year's forecast, daily and seasonal bag limits may be reduced or increased for a set of rivers within the same geographic area. The CMP also established a minimum threshold number for returning adult Chinook ("critical abundance") within each river system, at which point additional conservation actions would be implemented. Specifically, when the average of the prior year's return and the current year's forecast fall below this threshold, the CMP specifies a closure of wild Chinook salmon harvest in that river, which can be lifted once the average exceeds the critical abundance. ODFW conducts annual reviews of fish populations, and proactively manages the populations, including consideration of reduced retention limits, shorter seasons, or other measures to prevent a declining population from falling to its critical level.

For areas south of the Elk River, including the Rogue basin, fall fishery objectives and management approaches are guided by the RFCP, which was adopted by the Commission in 2013. Like the CMP, the RFCP also specifies management objectives and regulatory measures scaled to abundance relative to plan objectives, though the specifics of these provisions differ between the two plans.

Following Commission adoption of the CMP in 2014, wild Chinook salmon returns were considered to be in the "average" sliding scale harvest tier for several years and modifications to seasons and bag limit regulations were generally unnecessary. By 2019, the effects of poor ocean

conditions were evident in reduced fall Chinook salmon returns to many rivers and ODFW began implementing management changes based on the CMP sliding scale. In 2023, based on continued basin-specific variability and concerns, the Commission adopted rules for the *2024 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations* indicating that regulations for wild Chinook salmon bag limits and additional restrictions may change on an annual and basin-by-basin basis. This proposed rulemaking continues the implementation of annual adjustments to fall Chinook salmon regulations based on the actual and expected performance of each population.

In addition to proposed regulation changes for 2026 wild fall Chinook and coho salmon fisheries, proposed rule changes in Attachment 3 include substantial reorganization of the rule structure intended to improve clarity and consistency. The proposed changes use a uniform format across all coastal districts, align open area descriptions with those in the *2026 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations*, and are structured to simplify rule updates in the future.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Prior to the adoption and implementation of these regulations, the Department has encouraged public involvement in regulation setting through updates to the ODFW website and social media, and outreach to local groups and individuals by phone, e-mail, and in meetings. In addition to public outreach, ODFW staff have communicated the fishery proposals to coastal tribal partners. The public notice of rulemaking (Attachment 3) was filed with the Oregon Secretary of State and posted on their website on April 30, 2026. The public will also have the opportunity to provide formal written and verbal comments prior to and at the June 26, 2026, Commission meeting.

## **ANALYSIS**

The harvest provisions of the CMP were established to guide the Department's management of coastal fall Chinook fisheries, and to increase public transparency regarding how management decisions would be made. The CMP also explicitly recognized that adaptive management, which entails evolving management actions based on new information about the fish and the effectiveness of the strategies outlined in the plan for improving the health of the species and the fisheries, would be a key component of plan implementation. Adaptive management provisions are also included in the governing Oregon administrative rules. For example, the Department reviews available information and adjusts management strategies as appropriate, including any necessary refinements based on information obtained through monitoring and evaluations of relevant populations. A weight of evidence approach utilizing all available information, including the professional opinions of local biologists, is used to determine the appropriate harvest regulations for each coastal river basin.

In 2023, the Department's annual sliding scale analysis identified several issues that warranted a change in approach. These issues include, but are not limited to: 1) a declining trend in several basins; 2) changing environmental conditions that increase forecast uncertainty; 3) different performance among populations within geographic units (i.e., "strata" or multi-population aggregates); and 4) increasing freshwater harvest rates. As a result, in 2023 ODFW implemented

reductions in daily and seasonal bag limits in several rivers based on monitoring data and forecasts. This application of sliding scale responses at the population scale was different than what had been done under similar circumstances in prior years when regulations were changed for entire multi-population aggregates. Because the underlying issues have not changed, the Department recommended a similar response for permanent fall Chinook regulations adopted in 2024 and 2025 and recommends maintaining similar regulations for 2026, with several adjustments based on the most recent data as outlined in Table 1.1. Specifically, this year the Department is proposing to increase wild fall Chinook salmon bag limits for the Necanicum, Nehalem, Tillamook, Siuslaw, and Umpqua populations, and to reduce the wild fall Chinook salmon bag limit for the Nestucca population. These changes are based on each population’s prior year return estimate and the current forecast (Table 1.2), which indicate changes are warranted consistent with established and adaptive management practices. Due to conservation concerns, the Coquille and Elk rivers have been closed to wild fall Chinook salmon retention since 2020 and are proposed to remain closed in 2026. Under the RFCP, annual regulation changes may be implemented in response to observed status changes and new information for the populations covered by the plan (Table 1.3). Under the provisions of the RFCP, 2026 bag limits for these populations are proposed to be the same as in 2025 (see Table 1.1 below).

*Table 1.1. Current Regulations and Proposed 2026 Changes for Harvest of Wild Fall Chinook.*

Population	Current Bag Limit (per day/season)	Proposed Bag Limit Changes (per day/season)
Necanicum	1 / 2	<b>1 / 5</b>
Nehalem	1 / 2	<b>1 / 5</b>
Tillamook	1 / 2	<b>1 / 5</b>
Nestucca	1 / 5	<b>1 / 2</b>
Salmon	2 / 10	
Siletz	2 / 10	
Yaquina	2 / 10	
Alsea	2 / 10	
Yachats	1 / 2	
Siuslaw	1 / 2	<b>1 / 5</b>
Umpqua	1 / 1 (500 fish quota)	<b>1 / 5</b> <b>(No quota)</b>
Coos	2 / 10	
Coquille	Closed	
Floras/New R.	1 / 2	
Sixes	1 / 10	
Elk	Closed	
Rogue Aggregate	SW Zone rules	
Lower Rogue	SW Zone rules	
Hunter	1/2	
Pistol	1 / 5	
Chetco	1 / 5	
Winchuck	1 / 5	

Table 1.2. Population Escapement, Forecast, and Sliding Scale Decision metrics for assessing whether CMP-area fall Chinook salmon populations are above or below the Wild Harvest Closure Threshold (Note: the Decision Metric is the average of spawning escapement in 2025 and the 2026 forecast; this value is compared to the Closure Threshold to determine if wild harvest will be open or closed).

Population	2025 Escapement	2026 Forecast	Sliding Scale Decision Metric	Wild Harvest Closure Threshold
Nehalem	9,278	8,732	9,005	5,369
Tillamook	5,201	4,273	4,737	2,745
Nestucca	2,423	3,797	3,110	2,066
Salmon	1,601	1,908	1,755	363
Siletz	10,459	11,507	10,983	3,471
Yaquina	5,773	6,495	6,134	1,564
Alsea	10,004	10,243	10,124	3,846
Siuslaw	13,085	10,895	11,990	3,987
Umpqua	13,244	9,476	11,360	3,197
Coos	9,653	7,290	8,472	2,531
Coquille	1,412	1,219	1,316	2,833
Floras/New R.	386	229	308	100
Sixes	2,005	2,951	2,478	712
Elk	837	749	793	690

Table 1.3. Population Escapement, Forecast, and Conservation Status metrics for RFCP-area fall Chinook salmon populations. The Conservation Status Metric is an average of the 2026 forecast and spawning escapement the previous 1-2 years, depending on the population. If the Conservation Status Metric is less than the Conservation Status Criteria, harvest reductions or other actions are taken.

Population	2025 Escapement	2026 Forecast	Conservation Status Metric	Conservation Status Criteria
Rogue Aggregate	76,687	99,074	87,880	20,400
Lower Rogue	3,226	3,518	2,915	1,500
Hunter	1,422	629	779	300
Pistol	1,587	566	953	540
Chetco	4,432	2,493	3,462	1,440
Winchuck	696	310	503	300

## ISSUE 2

### 2026 Proposed Oregon Coastal Wild Coho Salmon Angling Regulations

## **BACKGROUND**

The Commission is being asked to approve bag limits and seasons for wild coho salmon fisheries in select Oregon coastal streams.

The proposed fisheries target wild coho salmon of the Oregon Coastal Natural (OCN) coho stock, which is listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Marine and freshwater fisheries for OCN coho are managed under a prescriptive management framework within the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to ensure they do not impact OCN coho recovery.

Since 2009, the Department has been able to provide limited harvest opportunities for OCN coho in selected coastal streams in some years, depending on the expected spawner abundance and allowable harvest impact rates. Oregon freshwater fishery proposals are guided by a Fishery Management and Evaluation Plan (FMEP) developed by the Department and approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Wild coho fisheries are subject to an annual review and approval from NMFS in addition to Commission approval. These fisheries have proven to be successful and popular, while meeting conservation and recovery needs for the wild coho salmon populations.

The expected 2026 ocean abundance for OCN coho is 75 percent of last year's record forecast and roughly 130 percent of the average OCN coho abundance since ESA listing. The expected abundance paired with the 2026 allowable harvest impact rates provide for meaningful opportunity for wild coho salmon harvest in several of Oregon's coastal streams this fall.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Prior to the adoption and implementation of these regulations, the Department has encouraged public involvement in regulation setting through updates to the ODFW website and social media, and outreach to local groups and individuals by phone, e-mail, and in meetings. In addition to public outreach, ODFW staff have communicated the fishery proposals to coastal tribal partners. The public notice of rulemaking (Attachment 3) was filed with the Oregon Secretary of State and posted on their website on April 30, 2026. The public will also have the opportunity to provide formal written and verbal comments prior to and at the June 26, 2026, Commission meeting.

## **ANALYSIS**

### Regulatory framework

Because OCN coho are listed under the federal ESA, wild coho salmon fisheries in coastal streams are subject to annual review and approval from the NMFS, which reviews annual ODFW reports on prior year's fisheries and proposed fisheries for the current year. This process typically occurs in late June-August, and at the time of this writing has not been completed for the 2026 wild coho salmon season; thus, implementation of these fisheries is also contingent upon NMFS' approval.

Amendment 13 of the PFMC’s FMP forms the basis of the ESA fisheries consultation standard for OCN coho. It includes an OCN harvest control rule matrix that compares parental escapement (i.e., parents of fish returning this year) and predicted marine survival of fish returning this year to determine a total (marine and freshwater) allowable fisheries impact rate. Parental escapement levels in 2023 were in the “High” category and marine survival was in the “Medium” category, resulting in a maximum allowable total fishery impact rate of 30 percent for 2026. Combined marine fisheries were modelled to use 55 percent of the impact rate in 2026, leaving 45 percent of the impact rate available for freshwater fishery planning.

The FMEP has additional criteria that must be met to implement freshwater wild coho fisheries. These criteria include expected escapement relative to full seeding values described in Amendment 13 for each coastal basin. The FMEP directs that for a freshwater fishery to occur in any coastal basin, spawner escapement after all harvest must exceed the 100 percent seeding value described in Amendment 13.

#### Estimation of harvest and escapement

To develop proposals that meet regulatory criteria, ODFW staff project harvest and escapement values based on the proposed fisheries (Table 2.1). Projected harvest rates are derived from observed harvest data from recent fisheries and incorporate adjustments to account for differences in bag limits and duration of the season. These adjusted harvest rates are applied to projected population abundances to project expected catch. Spawner escapement values are a result of the harvest impacts subtracted from the projected population abundances. These calculations are needed to ensure fishery impacts will remain below the population-specific ESA limits and management criteria.

#### Proposed season/bag limits

Basins with proposed wild coho salmon fisheries in 2026 are the same as in 2025 except for the Alsea Basin, which did not meet the criteria for implementing a fishery. For the Alsea, the pre-harvest abundance forecast is 14,803 coho which is below the Amendment 13 full seeding value of 15,100. After accounting for ocean and incidental freshwater fishery mortalities, the projected spawner escapement is 12,239, which is below the 100 percent full seeding required to implement a freshwater fishery. Similarly, the Umpqua basin does not meet criteria for a wild coho fishery (as in 2025) due to the projected spawner escapement of 26,086 being below the 29,400 full seeding value. In basins with proposed wild coho salmon fisheries, bag limits are the same as in 2025. Seasons are also generally similar to 2025, with reductions in the number of open days for some basins and increases in others based on projected returns and harvest (Table 2.1).

2026 harvest fisheries for wild coho salmon proposed in Table 2.1 meet all ESA and management criteria. Current rules limit the coastwide seasonal bag limit for adult coho to no more than five fish across all open areas in the NW and SW Zones.

Table 2.1. Summary of proposed 2026 wild coho regulations, with changes from 2025.

<b>Basin</b>	<b>Season Dates</b>	<b>Bag Limit (per day/season)</b>	<b>Changes from 2025</b>
Nehalem	9/9-10/28 (We, Sa, & Su only)	1 / 3	Days open increased: 21 → 22
Tillamook	9/9-10/28 (We, Sa, & Su only)	1 / 3	Days open increased: 21 → 22
Nestucca	9/9-10/28 (We, Sa, & Su only)	1 / 3	Days open increased: 21 → 22
Siletz	9/19-11/7	1 / 3	Days open decreased: 65 → 50
Yaquina	9/19-10/25; 11/1-11/7	1 / 3	
Beaver Cr	11/1-11/30	1 / 3	
Alsea	closed		Days open decreased: 53 → 0
Siuslaw	9/19-10/13	1 / 3	Days open decreased: 32 → 25
Umpqua	closed		
Coos	9/19-10/18	1 / 3	Days open increased: 28 → 30
Coquille	9/19-10/18	1 / 3	Days open decreased: 33 → 30
Floras/New	11/1-12/31	1 / 3	Days open increased: 30 → 61

### **OPTIONS (Issue 1 and Issue 2)**

1. Adopt the proposed modifications to angling regulations in the NW and SW zones as proposed in Attachment 3.
2. Modify staff proposals.
3. No action (regulations remain as published in the 2025 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations and in any applicable permanent administrative orders).

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Option 1. Adopt proposed modifications to angling regulations in the NW and SW zones as proposed in Attachment 3.

**DRAFT MOTION:**

I move to adopt the staff recommendation and amend OAR Chapter 635, Divisions 014 and 016 as proposed by staff in Attachment 3.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** *Upon filing*