

Annual Report on the Status of Oregon Coast Coho

The Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan (OCCCCP) was adopted by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) in March, 2007. The plan serves as the State of Oregon's management plan for coho salmon in the Oregon Coast Species Management Unit (SMU). As part of the adaptive management component of the conservation plan, ODFW (the Department) is expected to annually review coho monitoring data and report to the Oregon Plan Regional Implementation and Management Team on the status of Oregon Coast coho. In fulfilling this annual obligation, Department staff prepared a brief summary of the current status of Oregon Coast coho and implementation of Department actions called for in the conservation plan. This information was provided to the OFWC and is being made available to the public.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the current status of Oregon Coast coho in comparison to the desired status criteria for abundance defined in the conservation plan. As expected after one year of plan implementation, desired status abundance has not been achieved. Adult returns for the SMU in the fall of 2007 were down from what had been seen in the last six years (two coho generations). Adult returns to the southerly populations within the SMU showed a more significant drop than was seen in the northerly populations. This decline was seen uniformly in the southern populations. This suggests that marine survival conditions for the southerly populations were poorer than experienced by the northerly populations, and does not suggest a problem with freshwater survival. Poorer marine survival had been associated with the northern populations during the development of the OCCCCP. The pattern seen in 2007 is anomalous. This may be a one year occurrence, or the beginning of a trend. Identification of such a trend may be cause for some concern, but does not present a conservation concern at this point.

Table 1 provides the status of Department efforts to implement actions identified in the OCCCCP. Actions related to harvest and hatcheries have been implemented. Actions to protect and restore coho habitat have been partially implemented, as have actions related to Oregon Plan outreach, research, monitoring and evaluation.

Based on the review of monitoring data and implementation efforts, the Department concludes after one year that the conservation plan is being implemented and the status of the SMU is within the range of what should be expected.

Table 1. Implementation status of Department actions identified within the Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan. (Thorough descriptions of Department actions can be found in Appendix 3 of the OCCCCP.)

Action Description	Status of Action	Comments
Hatchery Management	Implemented	The last hatchery coho releases into the North Umpqua River occurred in May of 2006, and May of 2007 for the Salmon River.
Harvest Management	Implemented	Impacts from harvest on wild Oregon Coast coho have been within the guidelines of the PFMC's Amendment 13.

Western Oregon Stream Restoration Project	Mostly Implemented	Most actions underway. Tools to help landowners with beaver are still being developed.
Habitat Protection	Implemented	Biologists are consulting with state agencies on a variety of habitat related activities.
Promote Beaver Dams and Associated Habitat	Partially Implemented	Internal beaver workgroup is developing protocols and tools for working with landowners.
Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Program	Partially Implemented	Research proposal has been funded to study the effects of removing the hatchery coho program in the Salmon River. Monitoring sample design modified to provide better estimates at population level.
Oregon Plan Outreach Program	Partially Implemented	The Oregon Plan Outreach Team has been working on efforts to promote the conservation plan. ODFW's Oregon Plan Communications Coordinator position has been vacant for several months since plan adoption, hindering our efforts to implement actions.

Endangered Species Act Re-listing of Oregon Coast Coho

At the time of plan approval, Oregon Coast coho salmon were not listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). In February of 2008, after a court ruling overturned a “not warranted” listing decision, NOAA Fisheries Service announced that the Oregon Coast coho salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (the same as Oregon’s SMU) would be listed as threatened under the ESA, effective May 12, 2008. Within the Oregon Administrative Rule adopted by the OFWC as part of the OCCCP (OAR 635-500-6500) was language requiring the modification of the OCCCP if the SMU became listed under the ESA. The Department is aware of our obligation and is considering what modifications need to be made to the plan.

The ESA re-listing of Oregon Coast coho also means that a federal Recovery Plan for the SMU is needed. At the time of OFWC adoption, the OCCCP met the requirements of a conservation plan under the Native Fish Conservation Policy. Efforts were made during the development of the plan to ensure that the plan could also serve as a federal ESA Recovery Plan. The adequacy of the final OCCCP as a Recovery Plan was never formally determined. The Department has begun discussions with NOAA Fisheries Service to define what modifications, if any, need to be made to make the OCCCP acceptable as a federal Recovery Plan. The outcome of these discussions will be considered in determining what modifications the Department will make to the Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan. Once those decisions have been made, we will share them with the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, and will present any plan modifications for Commission approval.

Figure 1. Comparison by ESU and strata of estimated wild coho spawner abundance to conservation plan desired status. **Note:** 2007 estimates are preliminary and subject to change.

