



Northwest Regional Office



NOAA Fisheries

National Marine Fisheries Service

August 23, 2004

TO: Interested Parties, Practitioners, Local Governments, Industry Associates
FROM: NOAA Fisheries, Northwest Region
RE: Extended Comment Period and Community Meetings on NOAA Fisheries' Proposals for Endangered Species Act Listing Determinations and Hatchery Listing Policy for West Coast Salmon and Steelhead

Community meetings will be held in the Pacific Northwest from mid-September to mid-October regarding NOAA Fisheries' recent proposed hatchery listing policy and listing determinations for West Coast salmon and steelhead. Opportunities for public comment and discussion on both these proposals will be integrated into the public meetings described below.

NOAA Fisheries believes that these two proposals are intimately related and important to salmon recovery. Combining opportunities for public engagement on these issues into the same community meetings is an efficient use of the agency's and the public's time and resources.

Afternoon sessions will be provided for local practitioners and stakeholder parties involved with managing the Endangered Species Act on a regular basis. Evening "open house" sessions designed for broader public participation will also be conducted on the same day as the afternoon sessions. These meetings will be held:

- Sept. 14 Wenatchee, Wash. Chelan County PUD Auditorium
- Sept. 16 Kennewick, Wash. Red Lion Hotel
- Sept. 22 Newport, Ore. Shilo Inn
- Sept. 28 Salmon, Idaho Stagecoach Inn
- Sept. 30 Lewiston, Idaho Red Lion Hotel
- Oct. 5 Seattle, Wash. Radisson Hotel (SeaTac)
- Oct. 7 Roseburg, Ore. Umpqua Community College
- Oct. 13 Portland, Ore. Portland Building

(Dates and locations of public hearings to be held in California will be announced separately.)

Background

In June, 2004, NOAA Fisheries published two proposals (for its hatchery listing policy and listing determinations) and announced comment periods for public response to these proposals. Comment periods for these proposals have now been extended to October 20, 2004. (See <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/AlseaResponse/20040528/index.html> for more information).

NOAA Fisheries is conducting these practitioner and open-house public meetings as part of its commitment to provide ample opportunities to receive public input, as well as to provide a formal comment process. NOAA Fisheries' staff will attend and participate in these meetings. Staff will accept oral and written public comments on the proposals during the evening open-house meetings. A description of the format and purpose for these meetings follows:

Evening Open House and Public Testimony

Evening sessions will be designed in an "open house" format and will provide the general public with an opportunity to meet with NOAA Fisheries staff in small groups on specific topics in order to learn more about the proposals and their possible impacts on their communities. These evening meetings will also provide opportunities for the public to make formal recorded comments on the proposals. The preferred means of providing public comment for the official record is via written testimony prepared in advance. However, blank "comment sheets" will be provided at the evening meetings for those without prepared written comments, and facilities will also be provided for recording verbal testimony.

The evening sessions will be open from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Because these sessions will be designed as open houses where the public can move from station to station and discuss their particular interests with NOAA Fisheries staff, people can come and go from the meeting as they please. NOAA Fisheries hopes this format will allow busy community members to participate without necessarily attending the entire evening.

Afternoon Practitioner Meetings

In each community, NOAA Fisheries will also provide opportunities for input from practitioners and affected stakeholders who work with the Endangered Species Act on a regular basis. NOAA Fisheries believes this is another important element in effective and responsive rule-making, and will conduct an afternoon session (1:30 - 4:30 p.m.) in each community. The agenda and structure of these afternoon meetings will allow practitioners to discuss the subject proposals with NOAA Fisheries staff in small groups.

Attendance at the afternoon sessions will be on a pre-registration basis, and designed with the following participants in mind: tribal governments; forestry and agricultural interests; home builders and developers; sport and commercial fishing community; environmental community; business community; utility and special districts; local government elected officials and their staff; other locally-based federal and state agencies; and public interest groups.

How to Attend

Those wishing to attend the evening open-house meetings will be able to get information through advertising, NOAA Fisheries Northwest Region's Web page (<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/AlseaResponse/meetings.html>), and public notices published in their community. There is no need to register; just drop in any time during the evening event.

To register for the afternoon meetings, send an e-mail to James Rapp at jquinney@earthlink.net. If you do not have email access, send Mr. Rapp a note at 5845 NE 29th Ave, Portland, OR 97211. Please include the following:

- Name
- Title and affiliation
- Email address (or mailing address)
- Location you plan to attend (e.g.: Wenatchee, Roseburg, etc.)
- Which of the 2 rulemaking issues you wish to discuss

Attendees will be informed by return e-mail (or letter) of the specific location and time of each session.

Additional Opportunity to Comment

In scheduling these community meetings, NOAA Fisheries has anticipated that many affected stakeholders and members of the public may prefer to discuss these proposals directly with staff during the public comment period. However, these public meetings are *not* the only opportunity to provide input on these proposals. People are encouraged to continue to comment and provide input to NOAA Fisheries on the proposals via correspondence, e-mail and the Internet until the scheduled close of the comment period on Oct. 20, 2004.

For more information, or to obtain background materials, including the relevant *Federal Register* notices, see <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/AlseaResponse/20040528/index.html>.