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News Release

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NOAA Fisheries Announces Public Hearings in California

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's), National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has scheduled six public hearings in locations throughout California to gather public input on its draft hatchery listing policy and proposed Endangered Species Act (ESA) salmon listing revisions.

The hatchery policy considers the role of hatchery fish in ESA listing determinations and the updated listing proposals address the ESA status of 27 evolutionarily significant units (ESUs) of salmon and steelhead on the West Coast; including 10 that occur in California. NOAA Fisheries believes that these two proposals are closely related and important to salmon recovery. Combining opportunities for public engagement on both issues into the same public hearing is an efficient use of the agency's and the public's time

NOAA Fisheries has scheduled these hearings to allow the public the opportunity to provide comments directly to agency staff during the comment period. However, these public meetings are not the only opportunity to provide input on these issues. Additional methods to comment may be found at the end of this news release. The public and stakeholders are encouraged to continue to comment and provide input to NOAA Fisheries until the scheduled close of the comment period on October 20, 2004.

Public hearings will be held from 6:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. on the date and location noted below:

September 22, 2004 North Coast Inn 4975 Valley West Blvd Arcata, CA 95521	September 28, 2004 Monterey Beach Resort 2600 Sand Dunes Drive Monterey, CA 93940
September 23, 2004 DoubleTree Hotel Sonoma Wine Country One DoubleTree Drive Rohnert Park, CA 94928	October 12, 2004 Radisson Hotel Sacramento 500 Leisure Lane Sacramento, CA 95815
September 28, 2004 Best Western Hilltop Inn 2300 Hilltop Drive Redding, CA 96002	October 12, 2004 Fess Parker's DoubleTree Resort 633 East Cabrillo Blvd Santa Barbara, CA 93103

The format of the six public hearings will be traditional in nature. There will be introductory remarks regarding the hearing and a short presentation by NOAA Fisheries staff that provides and overview of the proposed hatchery listing policy and proposed listing determinations. The hearing will then be opened for the public and other interested parties to present oral comments on the two proposals. Depending on time availability, there may be a question and answer session after the conclusion of public comments. The hearing proceedings will be transcribed by a court reporter and the transcripts will become part of the administrative record for the two proposals.

Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

E-mail: The mailbox address for submitting e-mail comments on the hatchery listing policy is: hatch.policy@noaa.gov. Please include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the document identifier "Hatchery Listing Policy."

The mailbox address for submitting e-mail comments on the new listing determination proposal is: salmon.nwr@noaa.gov. Please include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the document identifier "Proposed Listing Determinations."

Mail: Submit written comments and information to Assistant Regional Administrator, NMFS, Protected Resources Division, 501 W. Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, California, 90802-4213. Please identify the comment as regarding either the "Hatchery Listing Policy" or the "Proposed Listing Determinations."

Fax: 562-980-4027. Please identify the fax comment as regarding either the "Hatchery Listing Policy" or the "Proposed Listing Determinations."

For more information on the draft hatchery listing policy and proposed ESA listing revisions, check the "Latest News" at swr.nmfs.noaa.gov. Copies of the Federal Register and additional salmon-related materials are available on the Internet at www.nwr.noaa.gov.