NOAA FISHERIES RELEASES INTERIM ABUNDANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY TARGETS FOR PACIFIC SALMON AND STEELHEAD LISTED UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

There are 7 Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) of salmon and steelhead in the Interior Columbia Basin that are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In support of regional, state, tribal and local recovery planning efforts the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is providing interim abundance and productivity targets for restoring those ESUs. NMFS believes these interim targets could be helpful for subbasin planning when formal delisting goals have not yet been established. NMFS' intends that these preliminary estimates help stakeholders size the effort needed to recover the species to the point where they can be delisted. These targets, and the recovery plans that address them, should also help reduce the uncertainty, and the costs associated with such uncertainty, that would otherwise occur for affected landowners and other stakeholders. NMFS also hopes that these interim targets will encourage local involvement in establishing the final recovery goals through the Technical Recovery Team (TRT) and formal recovery planning process.

The interim abundance and productivity targets released are for naturally produced spawners, and rely on work from earlier recovery planning and/or related efforts. NMFS will replace these interim targets with more accurate and comprehensive viability criteria to be developed through the Interior Columbia Technical Recovery Team (TRT) process. Initial draft recommendations for these criteria should be available by late 2002 for the Interior Columbia Basin. Draft recovery criteria for the Willamette/Lower Columbia and Puget Sound ESUs should be available by April 2002. These interim abundance targets make no particular assumptions regarding harvest or any other take of listed ESU. NMFS intends that the final recovery goals will include harvest sufficient to meet tribal treaty rights and federal trust responsibilities.