

7. PUGET SOUND ROCKFISH STATUS – BRIEFING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Decision Page (Green Sheet)	1 of 3
Commission Request	3 of 3

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting dates: June 5-6 2009

Agenda item #7 Puget Sound Rockfish Status – Briefing

Staff Contact: Wayne Palsson, Research Scientist, Marine Fish Science Unit, Fish Program

Presenter(s): Wayne Palsson, Research Scientist, Marine Fish Science Unit, Fish Program

Background:

Rockfish are common throughout Puget Sound, but they are challenging to manage and are susceptible to overfishing due to their long life spans, infrequent reproductive success, and specific habitat requirements. Puget Sound rockfishes are co-managed with the Treaty Tribes and under the auspices of the department’s Puget Sound Groundfish Management Plan. Populations of several key species have declined prompting the Commission to take strict management actions to curtail fishing.

For the past several years, department staff has undertaken a review of rockfish biology, habitat needs, and abundance of rockfishes in Puget Sound. The review team has been impeded by limited information on abundance and life history but has found that most of the seventeen species examined are in a “precautionary” condition indicating they are declining or in unknown status. Several of the most common and uncommon species are in very poor “vulnerable” or “depleted” condition showing substantial long-term declines. The forthcoming report entitled, “Biology and Assessment of Puget Sound Rockfishes” has been peer reviewed by outside experts in the field. This report forms the scientific foundation of a conservation and recovery plan for Puget Sound Rockfishes.

Stock declines have prompted concerns among citizens and NOAA. NOAA Fisheries recently reviewed the status of five less common, deepwater species under the auspices of the ESA. They have proposed that bocaccio is endangered and that yelloweye and canary rockfishes are threatened in Puget Sound.

The Department is preparing a conservation and recovery plan for rockfish in Puget Sound, which will develop long-term options for recovery and sustainable fisheries. The plan identifies a range of conservation options for eight policy areas including fishery, habitat, and ecosystem factors. The plan development is conforming to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) under which a public scoping process has already been completed. This spring we will complete a draft Environmental Impact Statement with a final plan anticipated for late 2009.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

Briefing only. The draft management plan for rockfish in Puget Sound will undergo public review this summer.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

We have completed the SEPA Scoping process for the Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation and Management Plan and will be conducting public workshops to collect input on the draft environmental impact statement and Plan this summer.

Action requested:

Briefing only.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

Communications Plan:

After circulating the plan to the public and holding public workshops this summer, staff will address and amend the plan as needed. Staff will also discuss the EIS and draft plan with NOAA Fisheries scientists developing and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for Puget Sound and leaders for the Puget Sound Partnership. A final plan is scheduled for completion in late 2009.

Form revised 10/16/2008 - sdy

COMMISSION REQUEST TO DEPARTMENT

a.k.a. "Blue Sheet"

Title of Request: PUGET SOUND ROCKFISH STATUS/RECOVERY PLANS

Commissioner: MAHNKEN

Priority Level (put one check in each row):

Importance: High Medium Low

Urgency: High Medium Low

Date Requested: March 6, 2009 **Date Assigned:** March 10, 2009
[Dep. Director use]

Assigned To (Program/staff person): Fish Program
[Dep. Director use]

Requested Due Date: June 5-6, 2009, Commission meeting

Knowledge or Action Being Requested (narrative). Describe what you want to know. Be specific.

Status of species (numbers), stock structure, population trends, ESA status of listing, life history characteristics, monitoring, recovery plans, cause(s) for decline, impact of listing on fisheries for other species, research needs.

Output Requested (e.g., telephone call, memo, material from files, new report, presentation, other):

Briefing at regular Fish & Wildlife Commission meeting.