

## The New Pacific Salmon Treaty Agreement

IN MAY OF THIS YEAR, negotiators for the governments of the United States and Canada reached agreement on changes to the Pacific Salmon Treaty that are expected to result in a significant increase in the number of Chinook salmon returning to waters in Washington State, particularly the Columbia River. The new agreement, not yet approved by either government, would reduce the harvest of Chinook salmon in Canadian and Alaskan fisheries of approximately one million fish from 2009 through 2018. About half of those fish originate in Washington and Oregon waters, including approximately 325,000 from the Columbia River.

The goal of those harvest reductions, as stated in the agreement, is to conserve naturally spawning Chinook stocks previously caught in fisheries off the west coast of Vancouver Island and in Southeast Alaska. In general, this principle means that Chinook salmon saved by restricting northern area fisheries must contribute primarily to spawning escapement. At the very least, fisheries in Washington and Oregon must be managed to ensure that the rate of harvest on wild stocks does not increase with increased abundance.

### Management Implications

In light of the new agreement, management strategies for Columbia River Chinook stocks and fisheries will need to be evaluated for consistency with Chinook conservation goals. This includes management strategies currently in effect for ocean fisheries, as well as the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries. Any new strategies would likely have to be implemented in time for fall fisheries in 2009.

Approximately 30 percent of the additional Chinook salmon expected to reach Washington waters are naturally spawning fish, subject to the conservation goals of the new agreement. The remainder, however, are hatchery fish that could exacerbate conservation problems if allowed to spawn with wild fish. For that reason, fishery managers will consider expanding selective fisheries to intercept hatchery-reared Chinook before they reach the spawning grounds.

### Funding Issues

Activation of the new treaty agreement requires additional federal funding. Under the agreement, the United States is obligated to provide approximately \$75 million to support mitigation of economic losses for Canadian and Alaskan fisheries, scientific studies to enhance management capabilities, and improvements to habitat associated with key wild Chinook stocks in Puget Sound. The major part of this funding is to be provided in 2009 and 2010. Failure to secure funding could result in suspension of the renewed treaty obligations.