

Northwest Region

March 18, 2010



Questions & Answers on NOAA Fisheries' Proposal to Conduct Five-Year Reviews for 27 ESUs & DPSs of Pacific Salmon & Steelhead

Q. What did NOAA's Fisheries Service announce today?

A. NOAA Fisheries Northwest and Southwest Regions announced that they will conduct five-year reviews for 16 evolutionarily significant units (ESUs) of Pacific salmon and 11 distinct population segments (DPSs) of steelhead. These ESUs and DPSs occupy streams and rivers in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and California.

Q. Why is NOAA Fisheries doing this?

A. Section 4(c)(2)(A) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires that we conduct a review of listed species at least once every five years. On the basis of such reviews, we determine under section 4(c)(2)(B) whether a species should be delisted, or reclassified from endangered to threatened or from threatened to endangered, or whether it should retain its current classification. In June 2005, NOAA Fisheries issued final listing determinations for 16 ESUs of Pacific salmon, and in January 2006 for 10 DPSs of steelhead. Therefore, five-year reviews are now due.

Q. Puget Sound steelhead was listed in May 2007. Will you conduct a review of this species even though five years have not passed since the listing?

A. Yes, we will conduct a review for Puget Sound steelhead. We feel it would be best to have all of the salmon ESUs and steelhead DPSs on the same schedule for review. This will also give us the opportunity review any new information available for this DPS.

Q. What is an ESU? What is a DPS?

A. The ESA defines species to include subspecies and "distinct population segments." NOAA Fisheries considers a group of Pacific salmon populations to be a distinct population segment if they are substantially reproductively isolated from other populations and represent an important component in the evolutionary legacy of the biological species. NOAA Fisheries refers to these populations segments of salmon as evolutionarily significant units, or ESUs. For steelhead, we instead apply the joint U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service-NOAA Fisheries policy on determining when a group of populations constitutes a distinct population segment (DPS policy). Under this policy, a DPS of steelhead must be discrete from other populations, and it must be significant to its taxon (species or subspecies).

Q. Will NOAA Fisheries convene new biological review teams for these five-year reviews?

A. No. Although we have used biological review teams to help us make ESA listing determinations in the past, we will not convene new teams for this review. However, scientists from our Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers (many of whom were biological review team members) will assist us in analyzing the best information available to use during this review process. NOAA Fisheries has convened technical recovery teams to aid in recovery planning for Pacific salmon and steelhead. These teams are composed of federal, state and tribal biologists, and scientists from private consulting firms and academia. They have developed information on historical population structure and ESA delisting criteria that we will consider during our five-year review process.

Q. Which ESUs and DPS of salmon and steelhead will be reviewed?

A. We'll review the following salmon ESUs: (1) Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon, (2) Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon, (3) Snake River spring/summer-run Chinook salmon; (4) Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon; (5) California Coastal Chinook salmon; (6) Puget Sound Chinook salmon; (7) Lower Columbia River Chinook salmon; (8) Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon; (9) Snake River Fall-run Chinook salmon; (10) Hood Canal summer-run chum salmon; (11) Columbia River chum salmon; (12) Central California Coast coho salmon; (13) Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast coho salmon; (14) Lower Columbia River coho salmon; (15) Snake River sockeye salmon; (16) Ozette Lake sockeye salmon.

We'll review the following steelhead DPSs: (1) Southern California; (2) Upper Columbia River; (3) Middle Columbia River; (4) Snake River Basin; (5) Lower Columbia River; (6) Upper Willamette; (7) South-Central California Coast; (8) Central California Coast; (9) Northern California; (10) California Central Valley; (11) Puget Sound.

Q. What information is NOAA Fisheries seeking from the public?

A. We're requesting new information since our listing determinations in 2005, 2006 and 2007 on:

- population abundance
- population productivity
- changes in species distribution or population spatial structure
- genetics or other diversity measures
- changes in habitat conditions
- conservation measures that have been implemented that benefit the species
- status and trends of threats
- changes to salmon and steelhead hatchery programs that may affect ESU or DPS membership
- other new information, data, or corrections including, but not limited to, taxonomic or nomenclatural changes, identification of erroneous information in the previous listing determination, and improved analytical methods.

Q. Where can I get more information on this proposal and the underlying science?

A. More information is available at the Northwest (<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>) and Southwest (<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>) Websites.

Q. What will happen after these reviews are complete?

A. After we complete our reviews, we will post reports for each ESU and DPS on our regional websites. The reports will describe the review process, document our conclusions, and present any new information. If a change in status is appropriate, NOAA will initiate appropriate rule-making.