



[Home](#) | [Who We Are](#) | [Sustainable Fisheries](#) | [Protected Resources](#) | [Habitat Conservation](#) | [Search](#)

Fact Sheet

West Coast Coho Salmon

(*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)

August 1999

Background: Since 1990, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has received several petitions requesting protection for coho salmon under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In response to these petitions and because of the agency's concern about the overall health of West Coast stocks of Pacific salmon, the agency began scientific reviews of not only coho salmon, but chum, chinook, sockeye and pink salmon, and steelhead and cutthroat trout as well. The scientific review identified six distinct groups, or Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) of coho salmon and resulted in proposed listings in July 1995 for three ESUs: a Oregon Coast ESU, Southern Oregon/Northern California Coasts ESU, and a Central California Coast ESU. In addition, two other ESUs (Puget Sound/Strait of Georgia and Southwest Washington/Lower Columbia River ESUs) were identified as candidate species because there were sufficient concerns about their health but the information did not support a proposed listing. The Olympic Peninsula ESU did not warrant a listing proposal nor was it identified as a candidate for listing.

Special Features: Coho spend approximately the first half of their life cycle rearing in streams and small freshwater tributaries. The remainder of the life cycle is spent foraging in estuarine and marine waters of the Pacific Ocean prior to returning to their stream of origin to spawn and die. Most adults are three-year-old fish, however, some precocious males known as "jacks" return as two-year-old spawners.

Scientific Findings: This species has been in decline in numerous streams in Oregon, Washington, and California, and there is a general geographic trend in the health of West Coast stocks, with the southernmost and easternmost stocks in the worst condition. During this century, naturally-reproducing populations of coho salmon are believed to have been extirpated in nearly all Columbia River tributaries. NMFS reviewed new information and public comments on the proposed ESUs, and concluded that all three warrant listing under the ESA. Available information supports the agency's finding that the Oregon Coast,

Southern Oregon/Northern California Coasts, and Central California Coast ESUs meet the definition of a threatened species, i.e., they are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their ranges.

What's Next: The listings became effective in December 1996 (Central California Coast ESU), June 1997 (Southern Oregon/Northern California Coasts ESU), and October 1998 (Oregon Coast ESU). At that time, federal rules went into effect for activities on federal lands or projects that require a federal permit. On non-federal lands, other so-called "4(d) rules" (protective regulations) have been published for the Central California Coast and Southern Oregon/Northern California Coasts ESUs. A 4(d) rule for the Oregon Coast ESU is still under development and will be tailored to mesh with whatever efforts have already been made by state, tribal and local conservation initiatives. The agency has identified critical habitat for the Central California Coast and Southern Oregon/Northern California Coasts ESUs, and will make a final critical habitat designation for the Oregon Coast ESU by March 2000.

Get more information on these listings by visiting the National Marine Fisheries Service's Website at www.nwr.noaa.gov; **by contacting Garth Griffin, NMFS Protected Resources Division, 525 NE Oregon St., Suite 500, Portland, OR, 97232; or by calling 503-230-5400.**

- [Protected Species](#)
- [Southwest Region Home](#)
- [Page](#)

[Damage Assessment](#) | [NOAA Restoration Center](#) | [Montrose Settlements Restoration Program](#)
[Southwest Division Law Enforcement](#) | [General Counsel](#) | [Recreational Fisheries](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Freedom of Information Act](#)

External links on this site are provided as a convenience to the user. Their inclusion does not constitute endorsement by the National Marine Fisheries Service of the information, products or services contained therein.