

Currents

News briefs on sportfishing issues and trends affecting the marketplace

Klamath River Dam Removal Study

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation received \$4 million to contract a study on the feasibility of removing dams on the Klamath River to benefit struggling salmon runs. The study will include an engineering analysis of removing the concrete structures and what happens to the sediment that has built up behind them during the past century. In November 2008, PacifiCorp, the energy provider that owns the four lower dams, agreed in principle to decommission and remove the dams. That agreement is intended to guide the development of a final settlement agreement by July 2009.

Florida Limits Red Snapper Season in the Gulf

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has announced that the recreational harvest season for red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico will start later in 2009 than in the past. Previously the state's Gulf of Mexico recreational red snapper harvest opened on April 15, with the federal season opening on April 21. The current recreational harvest season for red snapper in all Gulf of Mexico waters off Florida opened on June 1. A shorter fishing season is expected to reduce the harvest of gulf red snapper and help rebuild the fishery's population. Anglers may take two red snapper daily from gulf waters during the open season; however, the captain and crew of for-hire vessels in the gulf may not keep the recreational bag limit.

NMFS Proposes Protection for Pacific Northwest Rockfish

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recently proposed giving Endangered Species Act protections to three populations of rockfish in the Pacific Northwest. The NMFS has proposed an endangered listing for the bocaccio rockfish in Washington's Puget Sound and a threatened listing for the canary and yellow eye rockfish in the Strait of Georgia, which runs between Vancouver Island and British Columbia. The primary causes for the population declines are high harvest, pollution, loss of eelgrass habitat and unintentional capture from other fisheries. NMFS took public comments through June 22, 2009. A final decision is expected in 2010.

EPA Opens Public Comment Period on E15 Application

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is holding a public comment period through July 20, 2009, on a waiver application requesting an increase in the amount of ethanol blended into a gallon of gasoline from 10 percent to 15 percent. Of concern to the recreational fishing community is the potential impact the increase could have on boat engines, which are not



designed for use with gasoline containing more than 10 percent ethanol. Using a concentration greater than that level may void engine warranties, damage motors and fuel systems and lead to safety issues. Growth Energy and 54 ethanol manufacturers submitted the waiver application on March 6, 2009. The statutory provision calls for EPA to make a decision by December 1, 2009. For more information and instructions for submitting comments, visit <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/additive.htm>.

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NOAA Releases Annual Report on Status of Fish Stocks

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released its annual report to Congress on the status of U.S. fisheries. Four stocks (Atlantic bluefish, Gulf of Mexico king mackerel and two stocks of monkfish in the Atlantic) were rebuilt to allow for continued sustainable fishing. This quantity is the largest number of stocks to be declared rebuilt in a single year since NOAA declared the first stock successfully rebuilt in 2001. In the report NOAA scientists evaluated U.S. marine fish stocks and stock complexes and found that 23 percent of the stock were overfished (a population too low to ensure a maximum sustainable harvest) and 16

percent are subject to overfishing (currently being fished at a level that would threaten the stocks).

USFWS Rejects Endangered Species Listing for Coaster Brook Trout

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced that a petition to list the coaster brook trout, a form of brook trout found in the Great Lakes and its tributaries, as endangered is not warranted. The USFWS's finding, which appears in the May 19, 2009, *Federal Register*, determined that coaster brook trout in the Great Lakes are not a distinct population segment and therefore are not eligible for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The USFWS also

found that the coaster brook trout does not make up a significant portion of the range of the brook trout, another measure used to determine whether to list an animal as endangered or threatened under the ESA.

The Sierra Club Mackinac Chapter and the Huron Mountain Club petitioned the service in 2006 to list the coaster brook trout as endangered and to designate critical habitat. Coaster brook trout historically are found in parts of Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior. Roughly 119 Lake Superior tributaries and a half-dozen streams flowing into Lake Huron once supported coasters. Because of overfishing and habitat degradation, only 15 stream-spawning and three lake-spawning populations are known to exist, all in Lake Superior. ■