

Regional Coordination of the Coast-Wide Marking and Tagging of Pacific Salmonids: Operating Guidelines

Regional Committee on Marking and Tagging

November 2025

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Acronyms

Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans – CDFO
Coded-wire tag – CWT
Individual Fishing Quota Trawl Catch Monitoring Program – IFQCM
Mark Recovery Program – MRP
National Marine Fisheries Service – NMFS
Pacific Salmon Commission – PSC
Pacific States Marine Fish Commission – PSMFC
Regional Committee on Marking and Tagging – RCMT
Regional Mark Information System – RMIS
Regional Mark and Processing Center – RMPC
Selective Fishery Evaluation Committee – SFEC
Technical Committee on Data Sharing – TCDS
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – USFWS

Due to the dynamic nature of many items included in the following guidelines, this product is to be recognized as a living document that allows for updates and changes as needed.

Updates to reflect current agency activities and processes can be implemented by PSMFC staff when informed by the agency representative.

Updates to the collaboratively agreed upon content will be made following discussion and approval by the RCMT members.

SECTION 1 – OVERVIEW OF THE COAST-WIDE CWT PROGRAM

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Marking and Tagging Pacific Coast Anadromous Salmonid Stocks

The distribution of anadromous Pacific salmon and steelhead stocks ranges from California to Alaska. As these stocks migrate from their natal streams to the ocean and then back to spawn, they traverse different fisheries and political jurisdictions. As such, fisheries agencies encounter challenges to assess stock abundance, manage fisheries, and protect stocks that are depressed, threatened, or endangered. The principal means of developing this information has been to mark and tag juvenile fish and then recover returning adults in fisheries, on spawning grounds, and at hatcheries.

Through the years, a variety of marking and tagging techniques have been used for stock identification and research. These techniques included external marks such as fin clips and brands. Internal coded-wire tags (CWT) are currently the primary technique used for coast-wide stock assessment, harvest management, and enhancement evaluation for Chinook Salmon *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha* and Coho Salmon *O. kisutch*. Scale analyses, otolith marking, passive integrated transponder tags, and genetic stock identification are also used to identify stocks and address other management and research needs, but the use of these techniques is not coordinated through the Regional Committee on Marking and Tagging (RCMT).

1.1.2 Coordinating Pacific Coast-Wide Coded-Wire Tag Programs

The migratory nature of salmonids necessitated a need for fish marking agencies to participate in a cooperative Pacific coast-wide fin mark and CWT tagging, sampling, mark recovery, and data exchange effort. Dating back to the 1950's, the Pacific Marine Fisheries Commission's Mark Center (now Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC), Regional Mark and Processing Center (RMPC)) managed the U.S. Fin Mark List, funded through a cost-sharing agreement between state agencies and the federal government. The U.S. Fin Mark List was used to coordinate fin mark usage along the Pacific Coast and has been archived by RMPC.

During the early years of the 1970's as CWT tagging supplanted earlier fin marking programs, partners recognized the high degree of cross-agency cooperation required for CWT stock identification studies. Subsequently, they agreed to establish a U.S. CWT recovery data clearinghouse, while Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (CDFO) developed the Mark Recovery Program (MRP). The U.S. clearinghouse was initially managed by the Fish Commission of Oregon Mark Processing Center (now Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife). To support the data exchange, a system of CWT coordinators was established in 1974 to exchange information on use and recovery of CWTs by Pacific Coast fishery agencies. These coordinators reported each use of CWT within their agency to the U.S. clearinghouse and exchanged this information with Canada. During this period, partners determined the PSMFC would communicate assigned agency codes and facilitate discussion to coordinate new and transferred agency codes as needed. In 1976, the CWT database was transferred to RMPC, which was under PSMFC supervision.

Operations of RMPC were originally overseen by the 16-member Committee on Anadromous Fin Marking and Tagging that was formed in 1976 by merging the Committee on Coordination of Anadromous Fish Marking and the CWT Coordinators, which included representation from the five Pacific state agencies, British Columbia, Canada, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) – Alaska,

NMFS – Northwest, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This committee eventually became the RCMT. In 2025, the RCMT membership changed, following Canada’s resignation, to be 10 members representing tribal, U.S. federal, and state entities from California to Alaska (<https://www.rmpec.org/committees/rcmt/>). The RCMT supported research from California to Alaska as a technical committee that evaluated coast-wide marking and tagging proposals and coordinated coast-wide agreements on marking and tagging of salmonid stocks to ensure the integrity of the stock identification information provided by marking and tagging, sampling, and data exchange programs, with emphasis on the CWTs. The RMPC also maintains the online Regional Mark Information System (RMIS, before 1993 it was recognized as CWT Database) to facilitate exchange of CWT data among release, sampling, and recovery agencies, as well as other data users.

With the signing of the Pacific Salmon Treaty (Treaty, www.psc.org) in 1985, the bilateral Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) was established by the U.S. and Canada governments to implement the Treaty. The PSC is a decision-making body for cooperative fisheries management that is responsible for all salmon originating in the waters of one country that are subject to interception by the other country, affect management of the other country’s salmon, or affect biologically the stocks of the other country, with the intent that the U.S. and Canada conducts its fisheries and enhancement programs to prevent overfishing, optimize production, and to receive benefits equivalent to the salmon originating in its waters. As part of this responsibility, the U.S. and Canada agreed in the 1985 Memorandum of Understanding appended to the Treaty (<https://www.psc.org/download/45/miscellaneous/2337/pacific-salmon-treaty.pdf>) to develop a coast-wide stock assessment and to maintain a CWT and Recapture Program designed to provide statistically reliable data for stock assessments and fishery evaluations. The entities also identified the need to manage CWT data in a manner that these are accessible PSC assessments. The MOU established a working group (now the PSC Technical Committee on Data Sharing (TCDS)) in 1986 to establish a common data set and a set of protocols and standards for data input. For the U.S., RMIS was selected in 1988 to store and maintain the CWT database and to be the designated site for sharing data with Canada. The CDFO has an ongoing responsibility to maintain MRP as its CWT database and analytical system that shares data with RMIS. Data included in the PSC’s *Specifications and Definitions for the Exchange of Coded Wire Tag Data for the North American Pacific Coast* (i.e., Data Specifications), are exchanged regularly between RMIS and MRP to ensure concurrency of CWT data within the terms of the Treaty (Figure 1). The RMIS and MRP data systems also contain data of interest outside of the PSC to support user groups and other regional data needs.

Following the establishment of the Treaty, the RCMT’s role evolved to complement the PSC’s international responsibilities under the Treaty as data sharing roles were transitioned into the TCDS. With the emergence of mass marking in the late 1990s, the evaluation of mass marking proposals was transitioned to the PSC Selective Fishery Evaluation Committee (SFEC). With the bilateral roles for data sharing and cooperation of the RMPC within PSC committees, Canada resigned as a voluntary member of the RCMT in 2025.

The RCMT continues to serve as a U.S. committee to support its members by 1) coordinating CWT tagged and untagged prefix codes, 2) discussing proposed mark and CWT variances by members that are outside the scope of the Treaty, and 3) identifying specific tasks or products to support ongoing work and research related to marked and tagged fish. The RCMT discusses and produces products that are of common interest to the RCMT members and focuses on a broad range of fish marking and tagging topics including 1) challenges that arise in the field and laboratory that are related to CWT tasks (e.g., recruitment and safety recommendations that contribute to the quality of the CWT data), 2) requests received from new partners regarding how they can become a RMIS data provider or tag coordinator, 3) status of CWT detection/reading technology, and 4) release and recovery data that may be beneficial to exchange with RMIS. The RCMT also provides updates to its members regarding new guidance, recommendations, or products developed by PSC committees that may be of interest to other RCMT

members. The RCMT is the only forum that brings together U.S. federal, state, and tribal entities engaged in the marking and tagging of anadromous salmonids from Alaska, California, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

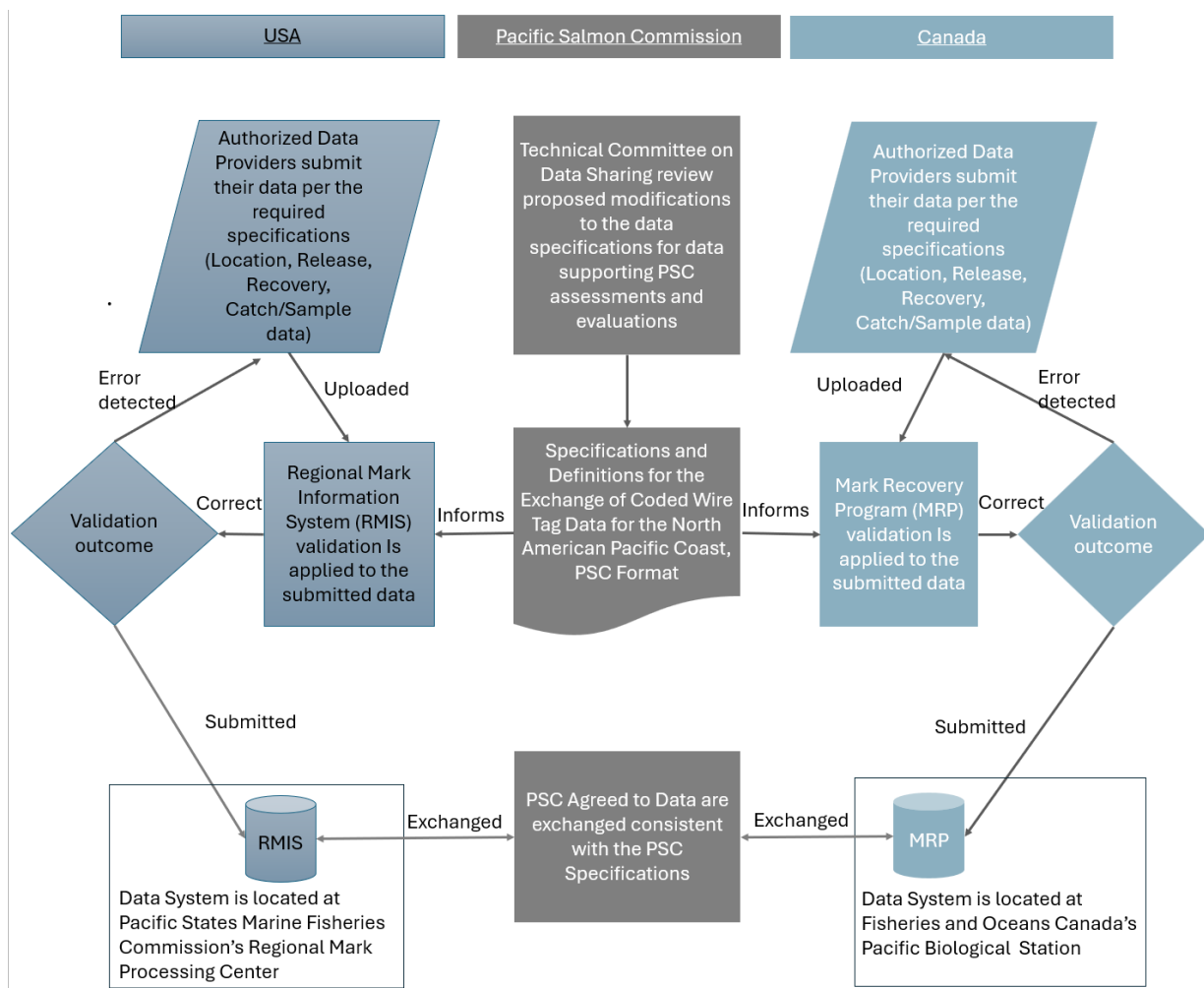


Figure 1. General overview of how coded-wire tag data flows among the RMIS and MRP systems. Parallelograms represent data sets, diamonds indicate a decision step, rectangles represent a process step, the rectangle with a curved bottom indicates a document product, and the cylinder indicates a database.

1.2 Pacific Salmon Commission and Regional Committee on Marking and Tagging: Summary of Complementary Aspects

The PSC and RCMT differ in their geographic scale, salmon stocks of interest, and products they produce. The PSC's SFEC focuses on salmon stocks subject to the Treaty and has the lead role in evaluating proposals for adipose fin mass marking and selective fisheries when there are impacts on PSC CWT indicator stocks, mark sampling programs, or on the information they provide. The PSC committees engage in cooperative activities related to these stocks such as stock assessments, fishery evaluations, and the publication of technical reports that support these activities. The RCMT focuses on all coast-wide stocks including those not subject to the Treaty. The RCMT also coordinates the coast-wide marking of non-Treaty salmonid stocks.

The complementary relationship between RCMT and PSC arose since their mutual interests include integrity of the coast-wide CWT tagging program and accessibility of associated data. By ensuring unique CWT codes are employed by RCMT members when tagging across all stocks and that inter-jurisdictional implications of marking and tagging programs are considered, the RCMT contributes to the quality of data consumed by the PSC process. The RCMT provides oversight to the RMPC and its publicly accessible RMIS data system. By supporting the use of the PSC data specifications in RMIS, this contributes to RMIS being able to provide access to CWT data directly to PSC analysts without the need to convert these data to align with the PSC data specifications. The PSC data exchange specifications guide the data exchange between the Canada and U.S. data systems for cooperative assessments and evaluations. The RCMT also serves as a forum where PSC members present PSC products and topics of interest (e.g., PSC committee updates on recommended improvements to enhance statistical analyses for treaty stocks). By providing a forum to discuss PSC products and changes to its data specifications, the RCMT members can identify value-added revisions or additions that are communicated by members serving on the PSC committees, to make these applicable to all stocks and their data. In addition, improvements to the RMIS query system, through RCMT recommendations, can facilitate the efforts of PSC committee members when using RMIS to mine data for their analyses. Appendix A provides additional details on the interactions among the RCMT and PSC committees.

SECTION 2 – REGIONAL COMMITTEE ON MARKING AND TAGGING

2.1 Scope

The RCMT focuses on Pacific coast-wide salmonid stocks originating in the waters of Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and California, including stocks of concern under the Treaty as well as non-Treaty stocks.

All U.S. CWT tagging or recovery federal agencies, state agencies, tribal consortium, and tribes on the Pacific Coast are represented in the RCMT, either directly or indirectly, as members and possibly directly engaged as RCMT tag coordinators and RMIS data providers (these are listed on the RMPC CWT Agencies and Tribes webpage: <https://www.rmpec.org/coordination/cwt-contacts/>).

2.2 Purpose and Objectives

The RCMT provides a forum for fisheries biologists and managers to share information to facilitate communication, coordination, and maintenance of Pacific coast-wide marking and tagging efforts. The RCMT ensures that unique CWT prefix codes are employed by the U.S. and that inter-jurisdictional implications of marking programs are considered. Canada's tag coordinator fulfills the role of ensuring Canadian agencies use unique CWT codes and communicates these codes within the bilateral *Specifications and Definitions for the Exchange of Coded Wire Tag Data for the North American Pacific Coast* that is developed by the TCDS.

Objectives

- Coordinate marking and tagging techniques for stock identification of anadromous salmonids.
- Review and discuss marking and tagging proposals and recommend modifications so it can be accepted.
- Communicate information to tagging, marking, and laboratory managers regarding special topics or recommendations from the PSC and other collaborative entities to inform their operations.
- Facilitate the return of recovered CWTs to their agencies for the agreed upon archival period as

requested by those agencies.

- Explore and recommend complementary and new tagging and marking technologies for stock identifications and recommend any additional data categories for inclusion in RMIS to support data exchange. Although these additions do not need to be included in the PSC data specifications, they must be documented in a publicly accessible format.
- Foster exchange and discussion of research and development of marking, tagging, and recovery technology.
- Coordinate and maintain the coast-wide CWT program, consistent with PSC guidance for Treaty stocks, to ensure the integrity of information used in stock assessment, harvest management, and enhancement evaluation.
- Coordinate CWT prefix codes and coordinator codes to ensure these are unique and clearly assigned and used by the appropriate entities. This includes discussing requests for new tag coordinators, assignment of new tag prefix codes, and maintaining the list of designated CWT coordinators and their assigned CWT prefix code.
- Promote the development and implementation of coast-wide data collection and reporting standards to facilitate the merging of CWT and catch/sample data into RMIS.
- Provide data management consultation and technical advice to partners and to the PSC committees using RMIS (e.g., SFEC, Coho Technical Committee, Chinook Technical Committee, and TCDS).
- Identify additions or refinements to RMIS data fields to better support other RMIS users and submit changes using the Request Form to TCDS when these apply to PSC data fields.
- Establish priorities and coordinate plans to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness of data acquisition and delivery to RMIS.
- Provide guidance to the RCMT Chair in serving as chairperson of the RCMT and in performing the duties as manager of the RMPC. The RCMT Chair reports to the PSMFC Executive Director.
- Provide oversight and guidance to the RMPC regarding operations including development of specific products to support existing marking and tagging programs, improving access to information including gray-literature, and data exchanged with RMIS, including PSC and non-PSC data.

2.3 Voluntary Participation

Each voluntary member entity agrees to participate fully in the activities of the RCMT. Entities engaged in RCMT consist of Pacific Coast federal agencies, state agencies, tribal consortium, and tribal agencies engaged in CWT tagging or recovery, whether directly or indirectly engaged.

Each member agrees to share and encourage adherence to the RCMT recommendations and guidance.

If the RMCT member believes a proposed recommendation, guidance, action, or decision either conflicts with or is detrimental to PSC processes, the RCMT Chair and RCMT members who are engaged in the PSC can convene a meeting with the relevant PSC committee or secretariat staff to discuss and identify alternatives for the RCMT to consider.

If an entity chooses to not adhere to a RCMT guidance and this decision is interpreted as posing a risk to another member's program, the RCMT can request the PSMFC's Executive Director to contact the entity's director(s) to resolve the problem.

Member entities may terminate their membership upon 30 days via a written notice to the other members.

2.4 Roles and Responsibilities

2.4.1 RCMT Chair

The PSMFC Manager of the RMPC serves as the RCMT Chair and reports to the PSMFC Executive Director.

Role

- Identify issues of interest to the RCMT members, provide access to information to facilitate discussion, and support members' needs
- Communicate requests for new tag coordinators, RMIS data providers, new tag prefix codes, and mark variance to RCMT members
- Coordinate information to be communicated from the RMPC team and tasks assigned by RCMT to RMPC team
- Facilitates information exchange between TCDS and RCMT, including ensuring relevant information from Canada is communicated to the RCMT following CDFO resignation as a RCMT member in 2025
- Identifies topic of common interest and ensures appropriate information exchange between RCMT and PSC occurs to facilitate coordination and alignment such as with the TCDS and SFEC
- Coordinate fish marks in the region (previously referred to by the title of "Regional Mark Coordinator" and assigned to the RCMT Chair/RMPC Manager)

Responsibilities

- Ensure timely development and communication of the RCMT agenda and meeting minutes
- Identify new and refined PSC guidance from relevant PSC committees and other groups that is of interest to RCMT and facilitates access to this information by adding a speaker to the RCMT agenda or sharing relevant documents with the RCMT, including relevant information from Canada
- Track action items and decisions
- Chair the RCMT
- Convene RCMT meetings
- Oversee ad-hoc groups formed to assist with implementation of RCMT action items and tasks
- Ensures requested additions or refinements to RMIS data fields identified by RMIS users or RCMT members that fall within the PSC specification document are communicated to the TCDS. If needed, submit changes using the Request Form to the TCDS.

2.4.2 RCMT Members

Members are representatives, either directly or indirectly, of U.S. CWT tagging and recovery agencies. Past members included British Columbia and Canada CWT tagging and recovery agencies, and these agencies can request to be reinstated as members if interested in the future. Current federal, state, and tribal members are listed on the RCMT webpage (<https://www.rmpec.org/committees/rcmt/>).

Tribal commissions, NMFS, and USFWS may have more than one committee member to represent different regions and marking programs. Private aquaculture, universities, PUDs, and other marking entities are represented through their respective state, federal, or tribal regulatory entity.

New requests to become a RCMT member are reviewed by the RCMT and require a majority vote by existing RCMT members to gain membership.

Current identified members, those able to vote, represent NMFS, USFWS, CRITFC, NWIFC, Metlakatla, ADF&G, WDFW, ODFW, and CDFW. The list of individuals representing these member entities is available on the RCMT page of the RMPC website (<https://www.rmpec.org/committees/rcmt/>).

Role

- Identify current issues, information, expertise, and products needed to ensure the quality of data collected from the field and processed in laboratories
- Communicate information needed for marking and tagging coordination by exchanging information about existing and planned marking and tagging
- Report, to their entity, issues identified through the RCMT, including the need for their data providers to address data concerns identified by RMPC staff
- Identify expertise from their agency to present to the RCMT and contribute to the development of RCMT requested products

Responsibilities

- Attend RCMT meetings
- Vote on new member requests
- Review, approve, and coordinate transfer of responsibilities related to a new entity becoming a tag coordinator or RMIS data provider
- Provide their entity's update on tagging levels, mass marking, and comments during the RCMT annual meeting
- Submit and discuss requests for variances
- Review and contribute agenda item for the annual meeting and its meeting notes
- Review and contribute to RCMT draft and final products
- Coordinate updates to tag coordinators and data providers contact information
- Request information to be presented at the RCMT by the RMPC staff

2.4.3 RCMT Tag Coordinators

The RCMT tag coordinators are assigned by the CWT releasing agency, tribe, or tribal commission/consortium and may be directly or indirectly represented by a RCMT member. Current tag coordinators and associated tag prefix codes are listed on the Prefix for Tagged Release and Untagged Code on the RMPC webpage (<https://www.rmpec.org/coordination/prefix-code/>).

Role

- Manage and track release groups to ensure CWT tag prefix codes are correctly assigned to release groups
- Respond to inquiries about releases

Responsibilities

- Report all released CWTs and their code, including CWTs shared with other agencies
- Provide information needed for providing their entity's update during the annual RCMT meeting to their RCMT member
- Participate in the RCMT meeting
- Adhere to relevant specifications and requirements as detailed in current version of the

Specifications and Definitions for the Exchange of Coded Wire Tag Data for the North American Pacific Coast and associated documents available on the RMPC website.

2.4.4 RMIS Data Provider

The RMIS data providers are assigned by the agency, tribe, or tribal commission/consortium that has been authorized to submit their data directly to RMIS. These include individuals whose entities are directly and indirectly represented by an RCMT member. Current data providers and their assigned data categories are listed on the RMPC webpage (<https://www.rmpc.org/coordination/data-providers/>).

Role

- Submit their entity's data to RMIS, specifically the data categories for which they have been assigned responsibility
- Coordinate with other entities who are lead on submitting other data categories as needed

Responsibilities

- Adhere to the data specifications, including the data submittal process and agreed to deadlines described in the most recent version of the *Specifications and Definitions for the Exchange of Coded Wire Tag Data for the North American Pacific Coast* and associated documents.
- Ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data submitted to RMIS, and work with the RMPC team to correct known data issues
- Participate in the RCMT meeting
- Provide information about unassociated (untagged) release groups (internally referred to as Bang records in the database). This information allows for a better understanding of hatchery and natural fish occurrence in the fisheries and on the spawning grounds.

2.5 Meeting Procedures

Meetings and workshops foster the exchange of information regarding marking and recovery programs, associated challenges, and new technology and approaches.

Issues requiring attention prior to the annual meeting can be resolved via virtual conferences, e-mail, or polling of committee members by the RCMT Chair. Any items identified as requiring a vote will follow the guidance in this document.

2.5.1 Attendees

The RMCT members are expected to participate in all RCMT meetings or to send a proxy.

The RCMT tag coordinators and RCMT data providers are encouraged to attend.

All RCMT meetings are open to interested parties, such as individuals working for entities involved with CWT salmon and steelhead (release, sample, and data reporting) and managers/researchers utilizing CWT data. Input from observers is encouraged by communicating that request to the RCMT Chair.

2.5.2 Annual Meeting (In-person/Virtual)

Duration and date

- Duration of the meeting is between two to three days

- Date selected with input from the RCMT members, considering availability of the meeting location. The date and location will be confirmed at least six months in advance.

Frequency

- Annual

Location

- Rotational (i.e., by member entities) to facilitate coast-wide coordination of marking and CWT programs

Agenda

The agenda items will consist of the standing items listed below (order is not fixed) and any additional items proposed by RCMT members. The RMPC staff will contact members, in advance of meetings, to share the proposed draft agenda items and solicit additional items.

Standing Agenda

- General business items
- RMPC operations and announcements
 - Status of CWT dataset
 - Website, RMIS, publications, funding, etc.
- All agency updates
 - Tagging levels for current year
 - Mass marking plans
 - MSF plans and comments
 - Tag-laboratory update
 - Data submitter challenges and concerns relative to RMIS
- PSC SFEC update
- PSC TCDS update
- Marking, tagging, and recovery technology and techniques
- Announcements and requests for variances
- Guest presentations and special topics

Draft and Final Agenda Posting

- The preliminary draft agenda will be emailed to RCMT members at least two months in advance of the meeting for their input on agenda items.
- The revised draft agenda will be posted on the RMPC website (<https://www.rmpc.org/committees/rcmt/>) at least three weeks in advance of the meeting, and it will be emailed to RCMT members, tag coordinators, and data submitters to inform travel plans.
- The final agenda will be posted on the RMPC website at least one week in advance of the meeting and it will be emailed to RCMT members, tag coordinators, and data providers.

2.5.3 Status Update Meeting (Virtual)

The RCMT convenes a mid-year virtual meeting to receive updates regarding the status of tasks. The RCMT can choose to hold more than one of these meetings to facilitate actions to be taken to ensure the efforts stay on schedule.

Date and Duration

- Meeting duration is between two to four hours.
- The date is selected with input from the RCMT members and is discussed during the annual meeting

Timing

- Six months after the annual meeting (as needed)

Location

- Virtual

Agenda

- List of active tasks and their status (specific tasks are informed by tasks requested during the RCMT annual meeting)

Draft and Final Agenda Posting

- The preliminary draft agenda will be emailed to RCMT members at least one month in advance of the meeting for their input on agenda items
- The revised agenda will be emailed to RCMT members and posted on the RMPC website (<https://www.rmhc.org/committees/rcmt/>) at least one week prior to the meeting

2.6 Travel

Each participating agency is responsible for its own travel, per diem, and salary expenses associated with attending RCMT meeting(s) and participating in other committee-related work.

2.7 Voting

The following process is used when there is a request to add a new RCMT member or when an issue is identified by the RCMT as needing a vote. *Voting is restricted to RCMT-specific items. The RCMT does not vote on marking issues under the PSC, other PSC items, or items that affect the PSC.*

Only RCMT members can vote if an issue arises requiring such an action. Each state member agency and member tribe has one vote. Each tribal consortium has one vote. The U.S. federal agencies (i.e., NMFS, USFWS) may have more than one committee member to represent different regions and marking programs but are limited to a single vote as are other member agencies. The PSMFC serves as the umbrella organization for the RCMT but does not vote on marking issues. The following voting structure describes how a simple majority is reached.

Voting Structure

Agreement by Majority Vote

- The 30-day review period applies to all items identified for a vote. Agencies absent from the RCMT members meeting, during which a vote is called, may submit a written vote during the 30-day review period.
- A quorum (i.e., 75% of the RCMT members or their proxies) is required for all issues requiring a vote. A two-thirds majority vote of members present (excluding abstentions) is required to approve all issues (Table 1).

Table 1. Voting scenarios to realize a 2/3 majority.

Number Voting	2/3 Majority
10	7
9	7
8	6

- Agencies may designate a proxy for voting purposes if its representative is unavailable. Proxy designation shall be in writing and provided to the RCMT Chair prior to the meeting. Agencies shall indicate if the proxy has 'carte blanche' or can only vote on specific issues. If an agency is not represented by one of its staff or a proxy, it will be counted as an absence unless a vote is submitted in writing prior to the meeting.
- If an issue requiring a vote arises outside of the scheduled RCMT meeting and does not require discussions, the RCMT members can perform a vote by email.

2.8 Amending the Operating Guidelines (this document)

Amendments to the operating guidelines may be proposed and considered during the annual meeting. If an agreement is reached, the amendment shall be distributed to the member agencies for their review. A response will be requested within 30 days of receipt and incorporated into the operating guidelines. Amendments will only be submitted for a vote if requested by at least one RCMT member.

Minor amendments consisting of typos, factual errors, or updates to content that reflect an individual entity's information (e.g., requesting the return of their tags) can be implemented by the RCMT Chair. These amendments will be summarized in an email correspondence to the RCMT along with the revised version.

SECTION 3 – PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND DATA COORDINATION

3.1 RCMT Product Development

When RCMT members believe there is a topic or product that would be beneficial for the RCMT to better support or develop, the RCMT Chair is tasked by the members to oversee a process to fulfil this request. The process used will include multiple phases of development during which the members have opportunities to review products and provide edits. Examples of products requested by the RCMT that followed this approach include the CWT Best Management Practices document (https://www.rmpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Final-BMP-CWT-Lab-Guide_Oct2024.pdf) and laboratory poster (<https://www.rmpc.org/resources/cwt-info/>).

3.2 RMIS Data Integrity

Data integrity is essential; however, ever-present issues such as data not being submitted or errors not being corrected, despite repeated requests, require a resolution process. To address such situations, meetings should occur between the RCMT representative and data provider to determine the cause of the issue and develop an alternative approach to correct the problem. The RCMT representative and the data provider for that entity must collaborate to ensure they mutually understand what the issues are and to develop an agreed upon solution/resolution, which may include documenting why the data are unavailable or that the errors cannot be corrected.

3.3 Transferring Tag Group

In cases where a tag group is transferred from the owner/purchasing entity serving as the tag coordinator to the releasing agency, the releasing agency is responsible for submitting the release data to RMIS and must ensure they have the information necessary to complete the preliminary and final data submittal to RMIS.

The tag coordinator for the owner/purchasing entity is responsible for ensuring tag codes shared with other entities are reported to the releasing agency and is knowledgeable of the tag code's purchase and usage history.

3.4 Assigning Tag Prefix Codes and Coordinator Codes

Tag prefix codes and coordinator codes are used to aid in management and tracking of release groups. Tag prefix codes are the first two characters of the CWT for a release group. The coordinator code is derived from the “!” character followed by the 2-character coordinator code for “untagged” release group. At this time, AGENCY ONLY wire releases are recorded using the coordinator code for untagged releases.

- The RCMT encourages the sharing of tag prefix codes unless there is an agreed upon need to assign a new tag prefix code to the requesting entity.
- The process to add a new tag prefix code, either for a new tag coordinator or to add a new tag prefix code to an existing tag coordinator include the following:
 - Supported by the current tag prefix code agency/tribe.
 - The RCMT member for the entity making the request must discuss the request with all RCMT members. This can be initially discussed via email with a final decision communicated at the next RCMT annual meeting.
 - If the request for a new tag prefix code is granted by RCMT, the RCMT may recommend the number for the new tag prefix code.
 - The requesting entity will submit a request for the new tag prefix code recommended by the RCMT to the company providing CWTs (e.g., Northwest Marine Technology) and copy the RMPC chair and the existing RMPC members.
 - The entity receiving the new tag prefix will update the RCMT and RMPC of their process in obtaining the tag prefix code from the company providing CWTs and confirm the tag prefix code assigned.
- All assigned tag prefix codes and coordinator codes are posted on the RMPC website along with the entity's point of contact.
- The company providing the CWTs is expected to facilitate unique tag assignment to avoid tag code duplication and work with tag coordinators to locate tag distribution.

3.5 Assigning the Role of Tag Coordinator to a New Entity

For a new entity to become a tag coordinator:

- The requesting entity must have regulatory authority over fisheries.
 - If it does not, the entity will be referred to the agency/tribe with the authority to coordinate their tagging needs.
 - If it does, the RCMT Chair will communicate the request initially to the RCMT members affected by this request to confirm support for the request
- If the requesting entity is currently supported by an existing tag coordinating agency/tribe, both

must agree with the request for the requesting entity to become a new tag coordinator. Details about how responsibilities for data submittal to RMIS will be affected by this request must be submitted along with the request to the RCMT Chair.

- The request must be submitted to the RCMT Chair along with information about whether this will also involve having a new RMIS data provider.
- The RCMT Chair will communicate the request along with details on the changes/impacts to all RCMT members.
- The RCMT members will be provided with the opportunity to request clarification and raise any concerns.
- If no RCMT members raise a valid reason for denying the request, the request will be granted.
- The requesting entity should then inform the RMPC program manager of the new tag coordinator's contact information and work with RMPC staff to identify who will be the authorized data provider.

3.6 Assigning the Role of Data Provider to a New Entity

Requests to become a direct data provider to RMIS must be supported by their representative RCMT member and the entity currently submitting data on their behalf. This request should be in the best interest of both entities.

To become a data provider, an entity must:

- Communicate their intent with their RCMT member or entity submitting data on their behalf to:
 - Obtain support for their request
 - Determine whether the shared tag prefix code/coordinator code can continue to be used
 - Identify which RMIS data categories (i.e., release, catch/sample, all) will be submitted by the new data provider
 - Confirm whether existing records in RMIS need to be modified
- Notify the RCMT Chair and copy the other entities involved (RCMT member and current data provider). The RCMT Chair will:
 - Confirm the support by all parties directly affected by this request and the details for transferring data submittal responsibilities.
 - Inform all RCMT members of the request by email (once support and details are confirmed). Provide RCMT members with an opportunity to request clarification and raise any concerns. If no RCMT members raise a valid reason for denying the request, the request will be granted. The change will be announced at the next RCMT annual meeting to ensure all parties are informed.

3.7 Submittal of CWT Data Retrieved from the Individual Fishing Quota Trawl Catch Monitoring Program

The process to retrieve CWT data from the Individual Fishing Quota Trawl Catch Monitoring Program (IFQCM) includes:

- The PSMFC's IFQCM Coordinator requests the NMFS laboratory, responsible for extracting CWTs as part of the IFQCM, to provide the sheet listing the CWT number, physical tag, and snout number, based on the port location, to the appropriate state contact (Table 2).

Table 2. State contacts for submitting CWT data associated with the Individual Fishing Quota Trawl Catch Monitoring Program.

California	Oregon	Washington
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Region Ocean Salmon Project 3637 Westwind Blvd. Santa Rosa, CA 95403 Phone: 707-373-1039	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife 17330 SE Evelyn Street Clackamas, OR 97015 Phone: 503-522-7469	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife 1111 Washington Street PO Box 43150 Olympia, WA 98504 Office: 360-902-2676

- The PSMFC's IFQCM Coordinator will email the Excel file with the associated fish data to the appropriate state contacts (Table 2).
- States will follow their usual approach for submitting RMIS data, consistent with the data specifications for submitting these data. For consistency of data entry, the following information should be included when data are submitted:
 - RMIS Description File - The number of IFQ-CM tags included and refer to these as NMFSNWR to be consistent with past year designations.
 - The sampling agency in the record is NMFSNWR.

SECTION 4 – CURRENT STATUS OF TAGGING AND MARKING APPLICATION

4.1 Use of CWT and Adipose Fin Clips: Current Status

4.1.1 Adipose Fin Clip as a CWT Indicator

As a result of the mass marking practice that involves clipping the adipose fin but not inserting a CWT in the respective fish, a clipped adipose fin does not exclusively indicate the presence of a CWT in the snout of Chinook Salmon and Coho Salmon. This practice represents individual agency decisions.

The majority of the hatchery Chinook Salmon and Coho Salmon in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, as well as Coho Salmon in British Columbia, are now released with a clipped adipose fin. Regardless of the presence/absence of the adipose fin, electronic detection equipment can be used to detect the presence of a CWT. Electronic detection is now the primary means of CWT sampling in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and southern British Columbia.

To assess the impacts of selective fisheries, double index tagging is used by some agencies. Double index tagging involves tagging the indicator stock with two paired tag codes (i.e., one with an adipose fin clip and the other without).

4.1.2 Use of Agency-Only CWTs

Agency-Only wire or agency-only CWT use requires submitting a request for use of non-CWT wire to the

RCMT. The proposed action will be reviewed for its impact on existing CWT recovery programs. Note that in the RMIS database agency-only wire are assigned the tag type value of 16 which is applied to both agency-only wire tags and previously used blank-wire tag used as a mark.

4.1.3 CWT Codes cannot be Re-Issued by the Manufacturer

Coded-wire tag codes must be unique across all CWT types. Uniqueness of tags can be achieved by a combination of unique number and tag type. Agency wires, which are not numbered CWT, use the assigned two digit agency code(s), which is unique by each agency.

4.1.4 Re-use of Surplus Wire

Coded-wire tag codes are intended to be unique and reuse of the CWT is not allowed in anadromous salmonids (i.e., codes cannot be used to represent multiple release groups). The CWT codes can be used only once in:

- One species
- One year
- A single watershed that is suitable for stock assessment

Surplus wire can be used in land-locked trout populations or other types of organisms (e.g., non-salmonid fishes, invertebrates, etc.)

4.1.5 Restrictions on CWTs Used

To ensure independent CWT programs remain compatible with regional CWT recovery efforts, new types of CWTs that could affect regional recovery programs must be reviewed and approved by the RCMT before being used by the agencies. An exception to this is if a new type of CWT is approved by the PSC.

Coded-wire tags produced by Northwest Marine Technology are currently the only tags reviewed, approved, and available.

4.1.6 Sequential CWT

To ensure proper use, the purchase of sequential CWT requires the approval of the appropriate CWT coordinator.

4.1.7 Responsibility for Reporting Releases of Shared CWT Codes

The tag coordinator of the releasing agency is responsible for reporting tag codes shared with other agencies, including purchase and usage history.

In cases where a tag group is transferred from the owner/purchasing agency to the releasing agency, the releasing agency is responsible for submitting the release report ensuring all pertinent information is included (i.e., preliminary and final as the information becomes known).

4.1.8 Responsibility for Reporting CWT Recoveries

Entities recovering and decoding CWTs (i.e., operating a CWT head lab) are required to work with a RMIS Data Provider to report the CWT recovery data and associated Catch Sample files.

4.1.9 CWT Returns and Storage

Entities that want CWTs returned and the length of time they will be archived.

Entity	Return Old Tags	Length of Archive
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	Yes	5 years
Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans	Yes	5 years
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Yes	5 years
Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission	No	5 years
Confederated Colville Tribes	No	NA
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	No	NA
Idaho Department of Fish and Game	No	5 years
Metlakatla Indian Community	No	NA
National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska	No	5 years
Nez Perce Tribe	No	5 years
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	No	5 years
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife	No	5 years
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	No	5 years
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	No	7 years
Yakama Nation	Yes	NA

4.2 Non-CWT: Current Status

4.2.1 No Regional Recovery Effort

Recovery agencies no longer sample the ocean fisheries for fin marks other than the adipose clip. As a result, single and multiple fin marks are primarily used for stock identification in terminal fisheries, on spawning grounds, and at the hatchery.

4.2.2 Duplication of Marks

Duplication of fin marks (single or multiple) for a given species is acceptable since there is no regional fin mark recovery effort. However, all marks must be coordinated with other agencies that may be impacted to ensure the integrity of their respective marking programs.

4.2.3 Coordination of New Mark Requests

Agency fin mark coordinators are no longer required to submit mark requests to the RCMT. However, mark coordinators still have the responsibility to work with mark coordinators from other agencies to ensure the integrity of all fin marking programs.

APPENDIX A – PSMFC and PSC Committees informing CWT use and analyzing CWT data

To facilitate cooperative Pacific coast-wide coded-wire tag (CWT) use, sampling, recovery, and data exchange efforts, the Regional Committee on Marking and Tagging (RCMT), under the umbrella of the Pacific States Marine Fish Commission (PSMFC), provides the forum for establishing guidelines, coordinating, and reporting agreements for non-Pacific Salmon Treaty (Treaty) stocks.

Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) facilitates implementation of the Treaty through advice from regional panels of fisheries experts. Scientific advice on salmon populations and appropriate fishery controls comes from several joint technical committees of salmon scientists from each country. The PSC has responsibility for all salmon originating in the waters of one country that are subject to interception by the other country, affect management of the other country's salmon, or biologically affect the stocks of the other country.

The following provides brief overviews of the PSMFC, PSC, and their respective committees including their roles, functions, and relationships with other committees.

Pacific States Marine Fish Commission

The PSMFC is an interstate-compact agency that assists agencies and the fishing industry to sustainably manage resources across California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska. In the 1970's, the Regional Mark Processing Center (RMPC) was transferred from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to PSMFC to serve as a host to the RMPC and Regional Mark Information System (RMIS).

Regional Mark Processing Center

Role

The RMPC provides coordination and data exchange services to international, tribal, federal, state, and other fisheries organizations involved in marking and tagging of anadromous salmonids from Alaska to California. The RMPC manages the RMIS data system, which, in 1987, was selected as the U.S. designated system for exchange with Canada's designated Mark Recovery Program system that is managed by the Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Data from these systems are exchanged to maintain concurrency as required under the Treaty.

The RCMT Chair reports to the PSMFC's Executive Director and serves as a chairperson of the RCMT. Management, day-to-day supervision, and administrative support are provided by the PSMFC.

Functions/Relationships

- Maintains RMIS to facilitate the exchange of CWT data among release agencies, sampling and recovery agencies, other data users, stock assessments, and research to meet regional information needs as well as PSC's information needs under the Treaty as described in the PSC data specifications. Data in RMIS is accessible to the public via its web-based queries.
- Validates multi-agency submissions of CWT release, monitoring and evaluation, recovery and related data used for Pacific salmon and steelhead research studies and harvest management. This includes managing the data exchange specification, validating data submissions, generating reports, and distributing documentation.
- Chairs and supports the RCMT with coordination of efforts, information sharing, and development of requested products.
- Staff serves as co-chair and member of the PSC's Technical Committee on Data Sharing (TCDS), which informs the PSC data specifications included in RMIS.

Regional Committee on Marking and Tagging

Role

The RCMT is a technical committee that focuses on sharing information about agency programs to facilitate data integrity while communicating, coordinating, and maintaining coast-wide marking and tagging efforts. *Unique to the RCMT, when compared to the PSC, is that California is a participant and the RCMT includes non-Treaty stocks.*

Functions/Relationships

- Coordinate marking and recovery techniques for stock identification of anadromous salmonids, aligning with PSC recommendations for Treaty stocks.
- Review and discuss all marking and tagging proposals and recommend modifications to the applicant so that it will be acceptable, aligning with PSC recommendations when involving Treaty stocks.
- Communicate information to tagging, marking, and laboratory managers regarding special topics or recommendations from PSC and other collaborative entities to inform their operations.
- Facilitate the return of recovered CWTs to their agencies for the agreed upon archival period as requested by those agencies.
- Explore and recommend complementary and new tagging and marking technologies for stock identification and recommend any additional data categories for inclusion in RMIS to support data exchange. *These data additions do not need to be included in the PSC data specifications.*
- Foster exchange and discussion of research and development of marking and recovery technology.
- Coordinate and maintain the coast-wide CWT and marking program, being consistent with PSC guidance for Treaty stocks, to ensure the integrity of information used in stock assessment, harvest management, and enhancement evaluation.
- Coordinate tag prefix codes and coordinator codes used by CWT entities to ensure these are unique, clearly assigned, and used by the appropriate entities. This includes discussing requests for new tag coordinators, assignment of new tag prefix codes, and maintaining the list of designated tag coordinators and their assigned tag prefix codes for all releases (i.e., tagged and untagged).
- Promote the development and implementation of coast-wide data collection and reporting standards to facilitate the merging of CWT and catch/sample data into RMIS.
- Provide data management consultation and technical advice to partners and to the PSC committees using RMIS (e.g., Selective Fishery Evaluation Committee, Coho Technical Committee, Chinook Technical Committee, and TCDS).
- Identify additions or refinements to RMIS data fields to better support RMIS users and submit proposals to the PSC's TCDS when these apply to PSC data fields.
- Establish priorities and coordinate plans to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness of data acquisition and delivery to RMIS.
- Provide guidance to the RCMT Chair in serving as chairperson of the RCMT and in carrying out the duties as manager of the PSMFC's RMPC.
- Provide oversight and guidance to the RMPC regarding operations including development of specific products to support existing marking and tagging programs, improving access to information including gray-literature, and the data exchanged with RMIS, including PSC and non-PSC data.

Pacific Salmon Commission

The PSC, an international decision-making commission, was formed by the governments of Canada and the U.S. to implement the Treaty by cooperating in the management, research, and enhancement of

Pacific salmon stocks of mutual concern. The PSC is responsible for all salmon originating in the waters of one country that are subject to interception by the other country and aims to have each entity receive benefits equivalent to the salmon originating in its waters.

The PSC and its committees have the lead role in evaluating proposals for adipose fin mass marking and selective fisheries when there are impacts on PSC CWT indicator stocks, mark sampling programs, or on the information they provide. The PSC's committees conduct analyses to inform decisions and management of PSC stocks, document their methods, and share their information. *The PSC does not include California in any of its activities or associated groups.*

The following are PSC committees that overlap with the interests of the RCMT.

PSC – Technical Committee on Data Sharing

Role

The TCDS functions as the lead committee for managing the data specifications for the data exchanged under the Treaty. Whereas, the RMCT serves as a forum for its members to discuss broader data needs, data submittal processes, and data access. Issues raised by the RCMT are shared, as relevant, with the TCDS to improve the data specifications for data of interest to the PSC committees.

Functions/Relationships

- Maintain and update the Specifications and Definitions for the Exchange of Coded Wire Tag Data for the North American Pacific Coast (aka Data Specifications), PSC format, used by MRP and RMIS to exchange data informing PSC data needs. The data specifications ensure the uniformity and consistency of codes and formats of exchanged data.
- Interacts with the PSC committees to understand new data needs and refinements to existing data being exchanged to improve the data quality and better support PSC committee analyses of mass-marking and selective fishery data.
- Maintain documentation of proposed modifications, input received, and modifications that are implemented.
- Coordinates the implementation of these changes by the MRP and the RMIS data system in a manner to minimize impacts on the PSC committees.

Standing Committee on Scientific Cooperation

Role

Assist PSC in advancing its scientific agenda by identifying emerging issues and subjects for new or additional research and by presenting scientific information to PSC.

Functions/Relationships

- Monitors the PSC's progress in assisting the Treaty Parties to enhance cooperation and consultation on science pertinent to the Treaty.
- Supports PSC technical committees upon the request of the PSC or the technical committees.

Selective Fishery Evaluation Technical Committee

Role

The PSC established the Selective Fishery Evaluation Technical Committee to assess impacts of mass marking and mark-selective fishing on the viability of the CWT and Recapture Program.

Functions/Relationships

- Serve as a coast-wide clearinghouse to facilitate coordination and reporting on mass marking and mark-selective programs among the parties, affected agencies, and existing coast-wide and

- regional committees established to monitor activities related to the CWT program.
- Provide advice to the PSC regarding potential adverse impacts of mass marking and mark-selective programs on the CWT program.
- Assess and monitor the cumulative impacts of mark-selective programs on stocks of concern to the PSC.
- Provide mass marking and mark-selective program proponents with information regarding concerns for potential impacts of their projects on the CWT program.
- Receive and review mass marking and mark-selective program proposals from the proponent(s) to identify potential issues and concerns regarding impacts on the CWT program.
- Establish a technical evaluation process for PSC stocks of concern that includes: 1) a process to review proposed mass marking/selective fisheries initiatives developed by the proponents and identify potential impacts on other jurisdictions and the CWT program, 2) procedures and protocols for marking, sampling, evaluation developed by the proponents, and propose alternatives to mitigate for adverse impacts, 3) establish standard formats and reporting requirements for agencies to use when providing post-season information, and review their evaluations of mark-selective programs and their estimates of mortalities, and 4) conduct technical evaluations of mass marking and mark-selective programs to assist with maintaining the integrity of the CWT program.
- Work with PSC technical committees to establish formal standards and objectives for a viable CWT program to: 1) enable more precise evaluations of potential impacts of mass marking and mark-selective programs on the viability of the coast-wide CWT program, and 2) guide the development of mitigation measures.

Chinook Technical Committee

Role

The Chinook Technical Committee reports directly to the PSC regarding annual catches, harvest rate indices, estimates of incidental mortality, and exploitation rates for all Chinook Salmon fisheries and stocks harvested within the Treaty area, as well as escapement of naturally spawning Chinook Salmon stocks in relation to agreed escapement objectives. The Chinook Technical Committee also provides annual reports to the PSC that detail: 1) progress in assessment and monitoring for each stock in the Sentinel Stocks Program, 2) progress in implementing improvements to the CWT program in the Treaty area as a result of recommendations from the CWT workgroup, and 3) compiled information from the management agencies regarding the conduct and stock-specific impacts of any mark-selective fisheries for Chinook Salmon in the Treaty area.

Functions/Relationships

- Evaluate management actions for their consistency with measures and potential effectiveness.
- Evaluate and review existing escapement objectives that fishery management agencies have set for Chinook Salmon stocks and, where needed, recommend goals for naturally spawning Chinook Salmon stocks.
- Recommend standards for the Minimum Assessment Program required to effectively implement Chapter 3 of the Treaty, provide information on stock assessments relative to these standards, and recommend to the PSC any needed improvements in stock assessments.
- Review the effects of enhancement programs on abundance-based management regimes and recommend strategies for the effective utilization of enhanced stocks.
- Review and recommend research projects.
- Exchange information necessary to analyze the effectiveness of alternative fishery regulatory measures to satisfy conservation objectives.

Coho Technical Committee

Role

The Coho Technical Committee evaluates and assesses PSC Coho Salmon stocks of concern. The Coho Technical Committee reports to the Southern Panel and assists with: 1) overseeing the exchange of pre-season expectations and post-season estimates of management unit-specific mortalities in the fisheries of each party including estimates of interceptions of mass-marked hatchery Coho Salmon, and 2) developing regional Coho Salmon pre-season and post-season evaluation tools and protocols for evaluating the cumulative impact of U.S. and Canadian fisheries on stocks of concern.

Functions/Relationships

- Evaluate the effectiveness of management actions.
- Identify and review the status of Coho Salmon stocks.
- Present the most current information on harvest rates and patterns on Coho Salmon stocks and develop a joint database for assessments.
- Collate available information on the productivity of Coho Salmon stocks to identify escapements and associated exploitation rates that produce maximum sustainable harvest.
- Present historical catch data associated fishing regimes and information on stock composition in fisheries harvesting Coho Salmon stocks.
- Devise analytical methods for the development of alternative regulatory and production strategies to meet objectives set forth by the PSC.
- Identify information and research needs, including future monitoring programs for stock assessments.