NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

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In an effort to resolve tribal and non-tribal allocations of Klamath River salmon, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and Commerce Secretary Ron Brown today agreed to a management plan designed to improve conservation measures while providing for additional salmon harvest now and in the future for Klamath River tribes.

In addition, the agreement by the two secretaries ensures that a definitive legal ruling on future allocations of Klamath River chinook stocks will be issued before Sept. 30 of this year.

The Department of Commerce will issue an emergency rule on April 30 to open the salmon season on May 1, as recommended by the Pacific Fishery Management Council, with two exceptions:

- The short commercial fishing season that had been expected to open between Horse Mountain and Point Arena, Calif., from May 1-6, will not open. Fishing in this area has a greater adverse impact on Klamath River chinook stocks.
- The May-June recreational quota for Chinook salmon will be reduced from 12,000 fish to 8,000 fish in the area between Humbug Mountain, Ore., to Horse Mountain, Calif.

Secretary Babbitt has set the 1993 tribal fishery quota at 18,500 salmon, an increase from 17,000 provided in the Council's plan. Secretary Brown has asked the council to revise the 1993 Chinook salmon regulations to provide for a spawning escapement of 38,000 salmon in light of the failure to meet spawning population goals in past years and the opportunity to take advantage of this year's water supply. This regulation change results in an increased escapement of 3,000 fish over the council's recommendations.

"These management measures reflect the extremely high priority that Secretary Babbitt and I place on conserving the Klamath River chinook salmon," said Brown. "Because these stocks of salmon are severely depressed, we must carefully manage them to ensure that there are sufficient population numbers for the future.

"We are committed to rapidly moving to a definitive legal ruling concerning the rights of all parties to the Klamath River Chinook salmon. The failure to do so over the past decade has been unfair to everyone concerned," said Brown. "As soon as the Solicitor of the Department of the Interior issues a ruling on this matter, I will ask that the Council incorporate Interior's allocations in its regulations for the 1994 season. The Solicitor's ruling should be completed no later than Sept. 30 in order that all parties have adequate time to plan for the 1994 season."

Secretary Babbitt added, "We are committed to ensuring that by the 1994 season, the legal allocation rights of the Klamath River tribes are fully incorporated in the Pacific Fishery Management Council's plan. We are also committed to restoring the Klamath fishery resource. By providing additional

spawning escapements this year, we can begin to take advantage of habitat improvements and start the process of rebuilding the resource.

"This decision allows the federal government to meet its trust responsibilities to the tribes while taking concrete steps to restore this important resource."