

2020 NWFSC Letter of Authorization Annual Report to Office of Protected Resources

The 2020 field season for NWFSC was severely curtailed due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. This report covers the limited field operations that took place prior to mandatory telework for all NOAA employees and during a brief limited return to work period in the Fall of 2020. Additionally, one survey was conducted off the coast of Washington and Oregon entirely by the charter vessel crew. No NOAA personnel were onboard and the vessel crew was instructed to conduct marine mammal watches prior to gear deployment as specified in the LOA. The limited field operations conducted in CY20 by NWFSC occurred within the three Research Areas (RA) defined in the authorizations. These are: Puget Sound RA (PSRA), Lower Columbia River RA (LCRRA), and California Current RA (CCRA).

- (1.) In the LCRRA monthly beach seining in February and March 2020 prior to COVID 19 shutdown.
- (2.) In the PSRA monthly beach seining in February and March 2020 prior to COVID 19 shutdown and October through December during a brief period of Return to Onsite Work.
- (3.) In the CCRA the Juvenile Salmon and Ocean Ecosystem Survey, Conducted by Charter vessel crew following NWFSC LOA protocols. The survey took place June 20-30, 2020 onboard the F/V Frosti and 47 trawls were conducted.
- (4.) In the LCRRA the Acoustic characterization of eulachon aggregations in the Lower Columbia River Survey, 17 trawls conducted and 178 km surveyed from January 27 to March 16, 2020. The following marine mammal species were observed in the river: California sea lion, Steller sea lion, harbor seal, and were away from the vessel and were undisturbed. Due to limited marine mammals present in LCRRA, the sightings at a distance, and the small acoustic footprint in the relatively shallow river waters we are not claiming any Level B acoustic takes for this project.
- (5.) The NWFSC had no Level A or Level B takes during the very limited CY20 field season.
- (6.) The NWFSC will continue to work with the AFSC coordinator, Rebecca Reuter, SWFSC coordinator, Elise Kohli, to discuss common issues.

