



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southwest Fisheries Science Center  
Fisheries Ecology Division  
110 Shaffer Road  
Santa Cruz, California 95060

June 14, 2007

Dear Interested Party:

The Technical Recovery Team (TRT) for the North-Central California Coast Recovery Domain has recently completed a draft report titled “A framework for assessing the viability of threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead in the North-Central California Coast Recovery Domain.” We seek comment from interested parties regarding the scientific content and analysis that underlie the recommendations made in this report.

Biological viability criteria specify those biological conditions that, if met, would indicate that populations and Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) are at low risk of extinction. Ideally, viability criteria for salmonid populations would be tailored to each population, taking into account specific biological characteristics of populations and differences in the inherent productive capacities of the habitats that underlie those attributes. However, the data required for such population-specific analyses are lacking throughout the entire recovery domain. We therefore have adopted population-level criteria that are general to salmonids, with the expectation that these criteria can provide preliminary guidance on targets for viability, but may eventually be replaced with population-specific criteria as more information becomes available. Proposed ESU-level criteria are similarly derived from fundamental principles of conservation biology, providing guidance on configurations of viable populations (the units that constitute an ESU) that lead to a high probability of ESU persistence by ensuring representation of diversity within an ESU across most of its historical range, redundancy of viable populations to guard against large-scale catastrophic risk, and ensuring connectivity among populations in order to maintain longer-term ecological and evolutionary processes.

We emphasize that the conclusions in this document are technical recommendations and do not represent policy decisions. Throughout the report, we have discussed assumptions underlying the proposed criteria and associated scientific uncertainties. Where those uncertainties are great, we generally adhere to the precautionary principle of conservation biology, which calls for erring on the side of conservation to ameliorate/mitigate the risk arising from such uncertainty.

We invite comment on the scientific content and analysis presented in this report. The report is available in electronic form on the website of the Fisheries Ecology Division of the NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center (<http://swfsc.noaa.gov/textblock.aspx?Division=FED&id=2266>). Comments should be sent via email to Brian Spence ([Brian.Spence@noaa.gov](mailto:Brian.Spence@noaa.gov)) with “Draft NCCC Viability Comments” in the subject line, or by regular mail to the address shown above. We ask that reviewers please submit comments by July 15, 2007.

Sincerely,

Brian C. Spence, Ph.D.  
Research Fishery Biologist  
Chair, North-Central California Coast TRT



