Title: Status and Management of Coastal Cutthroat Trout in Oregon

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Abstract:

Coastal cutthroat trout (CCT) populations in Oregon are grouped into four species management units (SMUs) for purposes of assessment and conservation under the state's Native Fish Conservation Policy. A status assessment in 2005 based on distribution, abundance, productivity, and reproductive independence found that none of the four SMUs were a conservation risk at that time. The Lower Columbia SMU was found to be potentially at risk due to the loss of life history diversity within some populations. More recently, the Oregon Coast and Rogue–South Coast CCT SMUs were assessed during the development of multi-species conservation and management plans. These assessments concluded, based on the limited data available, that viability risk for these SMUs is low. Monitoring results from multiple sources indicate a stable or improving status for Oregon CCT since the 2005 assessment. Snorkel surveys in wadeable streams are conducted annually in three of the four SMUs and consistently show high occupancy rates for CCT. Juvenile CCT out-migrants are monitored at several sites in the Oregon Coast and Lower Columbia SMUs. CCT migrating downstream at these sites likely represent multiple life history types, but many of these fish show external signs of smoltification indicating they are sea-run cutthroat trout. Adult abundance trends for migratory CCT are monitored at few sites, but recent estimates are generally higher than those observed in the 1980s and 1990s at all sites with long-term monitoring. There are no releases of hatchery CCT in Oregon streams, but seasonal harvest opportunities for wild CCT are available in many streams in the Lower Columbia, Oregon Coast, and Rogue–South Coast SMUs. Catch-and-release regulations are in place for most streams in the Willamette SMU, with seasonal harvest opportunities in select areas. There is no indication that consumptive fisheries enacted since a general closure in the late 1990s have had an impact on the status of CCT in Oregon. Recent regulatory changes and new sources of funding for habitat restoration will benefit CCT habitat and climate resilience in Oregon.