

PACIFIC MACKEREL HARVEST GUIDELINE FOR THE 2004/2005 SEASON

Situation: The Council is scheduled to review the current Pacific mackerel stock assessment and adopt a harvest guideline for the 2004-2005 Pacific mackerel fishing season, which opens July 1, 2004.

In 2003, a harvest guideline of 10,652 mt was established based on a biomass estimate of 68,924 mt. Because this relatively small harvest guideline could have interfered with harvest of other coastal pelagic species (CPS), a directed fishery was allotted 7,500 mt. The remaining 3,152 mt of the harvest guideline were to be used for incidental landings following closure of the directed fishery. However, by May 2004 less than 6,000 mt of Pacific mackerel had been harvested and the directed fishery remains open.

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) and the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) have reviewed the new stock assessment and the recommended harvest guideline. They will present their respective advice to the Council.

The CPSMT has completed the fifth annual *Status of the Pacific Coast Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Fishery and Recommended Harvest Guidelines – Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) – 2004* document. This is included in the briefing book as Attachment 1. The current stock assessment and management recommendations are summarized in Attachment 1, Appendix 2.

Council Action:

1. Adopt Pacific Mackerel Harvest Guideline for the 2004/2005 Season.

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit F.2.a, Attachment 1: *Status of the Pacific Coast Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Fishery and Recommended Harvest Guidelines – Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) – 2004*.
2. Exhibit F.2.b, CPSMT Report.
3. Exhibit F.2.b, CPSAS Report.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Pacific Mackerel Harvest Guideline for the 2004/2005 Season

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PFMC
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COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM STATEMENT ON PACIFIC MACKEREL HARVEST GUIDELINE FOR THE 2004/2005 SEASON

For the 2004 Pacific mackerel assessment, the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) agreed that the mackerel biomass estimate from the ADEPT model was appropriate, because it is consistent with the approach used in recent years, and the resulting biomass estimate is reasonable relative to what is known about recent recruitment. Based on a biomass estimate of 81,383 mt and the Pacific mackerel harvest control rule, the CPSMT recommends a harvest guideline of 13,268 mt for the July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005 mackerel season.

The CPSMT notes that several improvements for future assessments are anticipated in the near future. These include pooling of the southern and northern California party boat logbook information into a single index, increased and enhanced fishery dependent data from aerial surveys, and new research surveys. These anticipated changes are scheduled for review at the CPS stock assessment review (STAR) meeting in June 2004 and incorporation into the 2005-2006 fishery.

As the Pacific mackerel abundance estimate has decreased over the past several years, the CPSMT discussed overfishing concerns related to this fishery. Based on the current modeling approach and the harvest control rules in the fishery management plan (FMP), there is, currently, not a concern related to overfishing of Pacific mackerel. Historically, intermittent periods of high recruitment have supported relatively high amounts of fishing pressure. However, more recently, protracted periods of generally lower recruitment have contributed to lower levels of spawning stock and total biomass. Fishing pressure is largely influenced by availability of the resource to the fishery, as well as market factors. The U.S. West Coast Pacific mackerel fishery targets mackerel in the northern parts of its overall range and in inshore waters. It is possible that mackerel abundance could be strong south of the U.S. border and/or in offshore waters beyond the range of the U.S. West Coast CPS fleet. Also, as in other CPS fisheries, market dynamics greatly influence total harvest. While mackerel is desirable it is not as important to the CPS fishery as Pacific sardine and market squid. In addition, most commercial harvest of Pacific mackerel occurs within the area under limited entry as defined by the CPS FMP. Thus, given these reasons, the level of fishing effort relative to mackerel abundance should not give rise to immediate concern. However, model estimates of the spawning stock and recruitment relationship indicate little to no reproductive-related compensation at low levels of spawning stock biomass. Thus, issues surrounding recruitment-based overfishing should be monitored closely.

Overfishing for Pacific mackerel is defined in the CPS FMP as harvest exceeding acceptable biological catch (ABC) for two concurrent years. Recent landings have been well below ABC. Also, the cutoff value in the harvest control rule serves as a proxy for determining if mackerel is overfished. The cutoff value equates to a biomass estimate of 18,200 mt. The current biomass estimate, 81,383 mt is well above the cut off value.

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COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON PACIFIC
MACKEREL HARVEST GUIDELINE FOR THE 2004/2005 SEASON

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) heard a report from Dr. Kevin Hill of the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) regarding the Pacific mackerel stock assessment and proposed harvest guideline for the 2004-2005 season.

Based on the most recent information, the CPSMT is recommending a harvest guideline of 13,268 mt for the 2004-2005 season.

Based on this harvest guideline, the CPSAS is recommending a directed fishery for 9,100 mt to begin on July 1, 2004. After the directed fishery quota is reached, the fishery would revert to an incidental-catch-only fishery. There will be 4,168 mt as a set aside for the incidental fishery. The CPSAS recommends a 40% incidental catch rate when Pacific mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species (CPS), except that up to 1 mt of Pacific mackerel could be landed without landing any other CPS.

The CPSAS recommends an inseason review of the mackerel season for the March 2005 Council meeting, with the possibility of re-opening the directed fishery as an automatic action if a sufficient amount of the harvest guideline remains.

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