

PACIFIC WHITING MANAGEMENT FOR 2006

The Pacific whiting fishery management process is unlike that for other federally-managed West Coast groundfish for 2006 fisheries, for which catch specifications and management measures were adopted by the Council at the June 2004 Council meeting for the two-year period 2005-2006. The Council deferred a decision on setting harvest specifications and management measures for the 2006 Pacific whiting fisheries pending the development and review of a new stock assessment to occur during February 2006. An updated Pacific whiting assessment was prepared this winter (Agenda Item F.4.a, Attachments 1 and 2) and reviewed by a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel during February 2006 (Agenda Item F.4.a, Attachment 3). The Council should consider the advice of the STAR Panel, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and other advisors before adopting the assessment for use in management decision-making. The assessment, once approved, will be used to set 2006 Pacific whiting harvest specifications and management measures.

In 2004 and 2005, this transboundary stock was managed jointly with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, in the spirit of a new process described in a treaty that has been signed by both countries and is currently awaiting ratification by the U.S. Senate and passage of implementing legislation by the U.S. Congress. The primary tenets of the treaty include a joint U.S.-Canada annual assessment and management process, a research commitment, and a harvest sharing agreement providing 73.88% of the coastwide optimum yield (OY) for U.S. fisheries and 26.12% for Canadian fisheries.

The Council is tasked with setting an acceptable biological catch (ABC) and OY for Pacific whiting that will be used to manage 2006 fisheries. Considerations for this decision include the stock's current and projected status with respect to the overfishing threshold, the international agreement with Canada, and overfished species' bycatch concerns.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt the 2006 Pacific whiting stock assessment.**
- 2. Adopt a 2006 ABC and OY for Pacific whiting.**
- 3. Adopt 2006 management measures for Pacific whiting fisheries.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.4.a, Attachment 1: Executive Summary of Stock Assessment of Pacific Hake (Whiting) in U.S. and Canadian Waters in 2006.
2. Agenda Item F.4.a, Attachment 2: ***CD copy of*** Stock Assessment of Pacific Hake (Whiting) in U.S. and Canadian Waters in 2006.
3. Agenda Item F.4.a, Attachment 3: Report of the Joint Canadian and U.S. Pacific Hake/Whiting Stock Assessment Review Panel.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
 - b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
 - c. Public Comment
 - d. **Council Action:** Adopt 2006 Stock Assessment, 2006 ABC and OY Levels, and Management Measures
- John DeVore

PFMC
02/15/06