

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE MARCH 2004 MEETING

Salmon Management

Inseason Management Recommendations for Seasons Prior to May 1 for the Commercial Fishery between Horse Mountain and Point Arena (Fort Bragg Area)

The Council did not adopt any early openings for the 2004 commercial salmon fishery in the Fort Bragg area.

Adoption of 2004 Management Options for Public Review

The Council adopted for public review three options for salmon seasons off California, Oregon, and Washington. All options meet or exceed conservation standards for salmon stocks in the Council's Pacific Coast Salmon Plan and those listed under the Endangered Species Act. The options can be viewed on the Council website www.pcouncil.org beginning the week of March 15, 2004.

Salmon Hearings Officers

The Council appointed the following officers to the three salmon hearings on salmon season options:

March 29

The Chateau Westport, Westport, WA – Mark Cedergreen, Phil Anderson, and Jim Harp;
Coos Bay Red Lion Hotel, Coos Bay, OR – Ralph Brown and Neal Coenen;

March 30

Tradewinds Lodge and Restaurant, Fort Bragg, CA – Roger Thomas and Eric Larson.

Groundfish Management

Lingcod and Cabezon Stock Assessments for 2005-2006

Revised lingcod and cabezon stock assessments were adopted for use in 2005-2006 management decisionmaking. The lingcod stock assessment indicates the coastwide population is more abundant than previously thought and near the maximum sustainable yield level that would remove the stock from the overfished designation. The cabezon stock assessment indicates the population is not overfished, but below the maximum sustainable yield level (in the precautionary zone). These revised assessments will be available on the Council website in the near future.

Status of Groundfish Fisheries and Inseason Adjustments

Responding to recommendations from its advisory bodies, California Dept. of Fish and Game, and the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Council recommended inseason adjustments to 2004 groundfish fisheries, including, (1) Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) line modifications to close Cordell Banks to trawl fisheries; (2) corrections to the

regulations within the Cowcod Conservation Area; (3) increased bycatch caps in the California flatfish experimental fishing permit; (4) changes to recreational fishery RCA enforcement; (5) a change in federal regulations to match bag limit modifications adopted by California; and (6) a change in California recreational lingcod regulations effective April 1, 2004 to a one-fish bag limit, a 30-inch minimum size limit, and a two-month closure to retention in November and December. A complete list of inseason recommendations will be posted on the Council website in the near future.

Pacific Whiting Management

The Council adopted the new stock assessment for Pacific whiting. This stock assessment demonstrates that Pacific whiting have exceeded the rebuilding target and may now be delisted from the federal overfished species designation. The Council also set an ABC level of 514,441 mt and a U.S. optimum yield of 250,000 mt. Further, the Council encouraged the fishery participants to identify and avoid areas of high widow rockfish incidental catch to avoid the potential of inseason emergency action to reduce the whiting optimum yield below 250,000 mt in order to protect widow rockfish.

Pacific Halibut Management

Public Review Options for the 2004 Incidental Catch Regulations in the Salmon Troll and Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries

The Council adopted public review options for the 2004 incidental halibut catch in both the salmon troll fishery and the fixed gear sablefish fishery. These options are:

Salmon Troll Fishery

- 1a Restrict to one halibut per three chinook landed, allow one additional halibut to be landed without meeting the 1:3 ratio, and limit each landing to 35 halibut.
- 1b Restrict to one halibut per three chinook landed, allow one additional halibut to be landed without meeting the 1:3 ratio, and limit each landing to 25 halibut.
- 2 Designate the “C-shaped” yelloweye rockfish conservation area in the North Coast subarea (Washington Marine Area 3) as an area to be voluntarily avoided for salmon troll fishing to protect yelloweye rockfish.

NOTE: Option 2 may be combined with either Option 1a or 1b.

Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery

- 1a Restrict landing to 150 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut per 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish, and allow two additional halibut in excess of 150 pounds per 1,000 pounds ratio per landing.
- 1b Restrict landings to 125 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut per 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish, and allow two additional halibut in excess of the 100 pounds per 1,000 pounds ratio per landing.

Habitat Issues

Current Habitat Issues

The Council directed staff to send the Habitat Committee proposed letter on summer spills in the Columbia River to NMFS and other agencies, with some editorial changes. The Council also directed the Habitat Committee to proceed with the development of three letters for consideration at the April Council meeting. The letters address Klamath flows, the remand of the NMFS Biological Opinion on the Columbia River federal hydropower system, and rulemaking for essential fish habitat).

Artificial Reefs in Southern California

The Council directed staff to contact the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council regarding their involvement in the rigs-to-reefs program. The Council also asked staff to continue to track development of any proposed rulemaking regarding oil platform conversion to artificial reefs in Southern California.

Administrative and Other Matters

Legislative Matters

In response to a congressional request, the Council directed staff to draft a letter that addresses several matters, (1) summarize recent Council comments regarding fishery-related legislation; (2) request consideration of “grand fathering” in existing individual quota (IQ) programs and IQ-like programs (e.g., the Council permit stacking program in the fixed-gear sablefish fishery); (3) describe current Council work on development of an IQ program for the limited entry groundfish trawl fishery; (4) provide information about the Council process for developing and using science in Council decision making, specifically, the role of the SSC and peer-review protocols that gird the Council science development process; (5) comment on the Office of Management and Budget proposed peer review requirements for agency actions; (6) convey funding concerns, for example, Council base funding is not adequate for current program areas required under the current Magnuson-Stevens Act and other mandates.

Appointments to Advisory Bodies, Standing Committees, and Other Forums

The Council approved the following appointments to its advisory bodies:

Groundfish Advisory Subpanel - 2004-2006 Term

Mr. Tommy Ancona - California Trawl Fisheries Representative

Mr. Kelly Smotherman - Oregon Trawl Fisheries Representative

Mr. Marion J. Larkin - Washington Trawl Fisheries Representative

Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel - 2004-2006 Term

Mr. Stephen G. Fosmark – Gillnet Fisheries Representative

Habitat Committee - Indefinite Terms

Mr. Huff McGonigal – National Marine Sanctuary Representative

Mr. Hal Weeks - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Position

Ms. Teresa Scott - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Position

Groundfish Management Team - Indefinite Terms

Ms. Cyreis Schmitt - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Position

Ms. Jamie Goen – NMFS Northwest Region Representative

Mr. Merrick Burden - NMFS Northwest Region Representative

Ad Hoc Groundfish Trawl Individual Quota Committee - Indefinite Term

Mr. Frank Dulcich – California Processor Representative

Mr. Dayna Matthews – Enforcement Representative

April 2004 Council Meeting Agenda

The Council adopted a proposed agenda for the April 4-9 Council meeting in Sacramento, California. Agenda details will be posted on the Council website www.pcouncil.org early in the week of March 15, 2004.