

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE APRIL 2002 MEETING

SALMON MANAGEMENT

Identification of Stocks Not Meeting Escapement Goals for Three Consecutive Years

The Council confirmed that Upper Columbia River summer chinook, Grays Harbor fall chinook, and Queets spring/summer chinook qualify as exceptions for further consideration as overfishing concerns on the basis that fishery impacts in Council fisheries are less than 5% of the total adult population size. The Council also accepted the offer from the co-manager seats involved with these stocks to provide reports on the cause of the escapement shortfalls.

Methodology Review Process for 2002

The Council accepted the list of candidate methodologies for review contained in the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) report Exhibit B.3.b, and the recommendation in the narrative at the conclusion of the statement, noting the obligation of various parties to provide review materials well in advance of the October SSC meeting. Priorities may need to be determined based on the availability of materials at that time.

Final Action on 2002 Salmon Management Measures

The Council adopted the salmon management measures for 2002 ocean fisheries. Specific management measures for each individual area in California, Oregon, and Washington, such as season dates, quotas, bag limits, hook requirements, and halibut ratios are available on the Council website (www.pcouncil.org).

In general, for recreational fisheries:

- Seasons North of Cape Falcon allow increased chinook opportunity in May and June, but summer fisheries open later and have smaller adipose fin clipped coho quotas than last year;
- Seasons off Oregon central are similar, but with less catch of adipose fin clipped coho salmon;
- Seasons in California are similar to 2001, except for the Fort Bragg area and Klamath Management Zone, which are closed most of July this year.

In general, commercial seasons provide more chinook opportunity in most areas, but adipose fin clipped coho opportunity is limited to a small fishery in the Columbia River area.

Mitchell Act Hatchery and Budget Review

The Council was briefed on the status of Mitchell Act funding for mitigation of Columbia River hydropower and other development. Current proposed funding for FY 2003 will result in fishery production program reductions and funding for mass marking hatchery fish has been eliminated. The Council requested staff to respond to informational requests from west coast congressional delegates, and directed the STT to provide a technical analysis on the effects of program cuts on Council area fisheries.

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HABITAT ISSUES

Essential Fish Habitat Issues

The Council accepted the revised letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on dam re-licensing, with specified references to be included in the letter. The Council considered the possibility of writing a fast-track letter to the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of the Interior on NMFS' biological opinion regarding Klamath River flows. The Council chose to table the discussion until Friday, when more details about the potential letter will be available.

MARINE RESERVES

Review Process for Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS)

The Council asked the SSC Marine Reserves Subcommittee to conduct a scientific and technical review of state CEQA documents, yet to be received by the Council, on options for marine reserves for state waters of the CINMS. The Council and its advisors will anticipate the results of the SSC review at the June Council meeting. The Council will reaffirm to the CFGC of the intent to develop comments, and that comments on the state options will be developed during the June and September 2002 Council meetings if the CEQA documents are received in a timely manner.

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

NMFS Report on Groundfish Management

NMFS briefed the Council on the reasons for disapproving the Council recommendations for 2002 Pacific whiting harvest level. The recommendations were deemed not adequately precautionary, given uncertain projections of whiting recruitment. Further, NMFS declared the Pacific whiting stock over-fished on April 10, 2002.

The Council tasked the Executive Director with preparing a letter to the appropriate authorities in support of additional funding for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) program in the fiscal year 2003 budget; so as to accommodate at least the base MRFSS program necessities.

Groundfish Strategic Plan Implementation

The Council asked its Trawl Permit Stacking Workgroup to continue work on developing a trawl permit stacking program for the groundfish trawl fishery. For secondary (stacked) permits, the Council requested the analysis focus on catch history. This analysis will provide some foundation for a stacking program, but may also be useful in developing an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program were the IFQ moratorium lifted or an exemption granted. The analysis will also focus on species complexes rather than individual species, e.g., the Dover sole, thornyhead, sablefish complex and near-shore species complex. Given other groundfish workload, progress on trawl permit stacking will be delayed until after the September 2002 Council meeting.

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To continue progress on developing a permit system for the groundfish open access fishery, the Council expressed the intent for the Open Access Permitting Workgroup to meet during 2002. The Council also expressed interest in scheduling an agenda item for June 2002 to scope delegation of management of certain near-shore groundfish species to the State of California. For the June 2002 meeting, Oregon and Washington were asked to present information about interest in near-shore delegation in their respective states.

Interpretation of Fixed Gear Sablefish Permit Stacking Provisions (Amendment 14)

The Council adopted all recommendations in the GAP and Enforcement Consultant reports with the exception of the GAP recommendation pertaining to a cap on the limit on number of permits held. The cap issue was referred back to the GAP for the development of options. The Council will write a letter to the states recommending that groundfish license numbers be recorded on fish tickets.

Fourth Tier for the Limited Entry Sablefish Daily-Trip-Limit Fishery

The Council did not move this issue forward for further consideration.

Groundfish Environmental Impact Statements (EISs)

The Council directed their EIS oversight committee to meet on May 8-9 and define major alternatives for the Programmatic EIS and report to the Council at the June Council meeting.

Rebuilding Plans

The Council was briefed on the proposed content and schedule of rebuilding plans and associated FMP amendments. Draft rebuilding plans for some overfished groundfish species will be available for Council consideration in June, rebuilding plans for canary and bocaccio rockfish will be delayed due to technical revisions in the rebuilding analyses.

Groundfish Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Process

The Council adopted the 2002 STAR process and the SSC Draft Terms of Reference for Expedited Stock Assessment Updates with the caveat that an additional resolution of effectively involving the public in the process, including notice, information distribution, and attendance be included.

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The Council adopted the following inseason adjustments:

Chilipepper, S. of 40°10', Trawl, small footrope

Current limit 7,500 lb / 2 months
Proposed change 4,000 lb / 2 months
Rationale - Higher than projected landings of bocaccio rockfish in the first 2-month period.

Lingcod, Trawl, small footrope

Current limit 800 lb / 2 months
Proposed change 1,000 lb / 2 months, May-October
Rationale - Industry requested higher allowance to accommodate bycatch.
- Estimated bycatch of LE lingcod is 40 mt below harvest guideline, including fixed gear.
- LE landings in 2001 were 80 mt and the LE landed HG in 2002 is 163 mt.

Sablefish, S. of Pt. Conception, Fixed-gear

Current limit 350 lb per day, or 1 delivery of up to 1,050 lb per week
Proposed change 300 lb per day, or 1 delivery of up to 900 lb per week
Rationale - 23% of annual HG landed in the first 2-month period, though pace slowed in March.

Near-shore rockfish, N. of 40°10', LE+OA fixed gear

Current limit - LE 5,000 lb / 2 months, no more than 2,000 lb of which may be species other than Black/Blue rockfish
Current limit - OA 4,000 lb / 2 months, no more than 1,600 lb of which may be species other than Black/Blue rockfish
Proposed change - both 6,000 lb / 2 months, no more than 3,000 lb of which may be species other than Black/Blue rockfish
Rationale - Allow attainment of the commercial near-shore harvest guideline

Bycatch of yellowtail rockfish in the troll salmon fishery, N. of 40°10', OA fixed gear

Current limit 200 lb / month limit for combined minor shelf, yellowtail, and widow.
Proposed change Up to 1 lb of yellowtail per 2 lb of salmon, up to 300 lb / month
Rationale - Re-instatement of bycatch provision begun in 2001.

Yelloweye rockfish, Trawl, small footrope

Current limit 1,000 lb / month limit for all minor shelf
Proposed change 1,000 lb / month limit for minor shelf, no more than 300 lb of which may be yelloweye
Rationale - Remove any possible incentive to target yelloweye

Limited entry slope rockfish, N. of 36° and S. of 40°10' (Monterey INPFC)

Current limit - trawl 50,000 lb / 2 months
Current limit - FG 25,000 lb / 2 months
Proposed change - both 14,000 lb / 2 months
Rationale - New information regarding darkblotched landings in the Monterey area.

Splitnose rockfish, N. of 36° and S. of 40°10', Trawl, small footrope

Current limit - both 25,000 lb / 2 months
Proposed change 14,000 lb / 2 months
Rationale - New information regarding darkblotched landings in the Monterey area.

Pink shrimp trawl

Prohibit retention of yelloweye rockfish

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Multi-Year Management Cycle

The Council took action to begin development of an amendment to the Groundfish FMP. The amendment will include consideration of alternatives for both multi-year management and fishery start date.

The Council selected four alternatives for analysis. These alternatives contain different options for:

- Annual versus biennial management;
- Number of Council meetings used to develop management specifications; and
- Fishery start dates.

The goal for completion of the amendment anticipates adoption of a public review draft at the June 2002 Council meeting and final Council action in September 2002.

Transitional Management Cycle in 2002 through 2003

The Council adopted a revised management schedule for 2002. Rather than a three-meeting process, groundfish ABCs, OYs, and specifications will be developed over the course of two Council meetings. In June 2002, the Council will take preliminary action on ABCs, OYs, and management specifications. Final action will occur at the September 2002 meeting in Portland, Oregon.

The Council also requested the Ad Hoc Allocation Committee meet twice prior to the June Council meeting. The first meeting will be held via conference call in late May 2002, following the GMT meeting. The second meeting will be held prior to the June 2002 Council meeting. These Ad Hoc Allocation Committee meetings will be open to the public.

Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP)

The Council was briefed on the progress in implementing 2002 EFPs sponsored by the WDFW and CDFG and previously adopted by the Council. The Council approved an EFP to provide compensation fish for 2002 NWFSC slope surveys.

Yelloweye Rockfish Protection Near Halibut Hotspot Area

The Council approved a WDFW proposal to request the commercial fishing sector to voluntarily avoid fishing in the extended halibut hotspot area in Washington waters to protect yelloweye rockfish. The Council will also highlight yelloweye rockfish protection on the Council website.

PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

Proposed 2002 Incidental Catch Regulations for the Salmon Troll and Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery

Salmon Troll Fishery – The Council adopted the status quo restriction. Beginning May 1, license holders may land no more than 1 halibut per each 3 chinook, except 1 halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut may be landed per trip. Halibut retained must be no less than 32 inches in total length (with head on).

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Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis – The Council adopted to restrict incidental halibut landing to 150 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to 2 additional halibut in excess of the 150 pounds per 1,000 pound ratio per landing. Retention of halibut is allowed beginning May 1.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Appointments to Advisory Bodies, Standing Committees, and Other Forums

The Council appointed Dr. Martin Dorn to the Alaska Fishery Science Center position on the SSC. He will replace Dr. Gary Stauffer who has resigned after serving since March 1986.

In response to increasing management needs for groundfish, the Council stated its intent to create and fill two new advisory body positions at its June 2002 meeting. The first position is a new Northwest Fishery Science Center (NWFSC) position on the SSC, which is dedicated to a NWFSC scientist with expertise in groundfish population dynamics and assessment. In addition, the Council intends to create a new position on the Groundfish Management Team for a tribal scientist with groundfish expertise.

The Council considered issues regarding the sharing of the California tribal seats on the Salmon Advisory Subpanel and Habitat Committee (HC) by the Yurok and Hoopa Valley Indian tribes, and the overall basis of tribal representation on advisory subpanels in general. The Council noted the co-manager status of the tribes and the manner of their representation before the full Council and in other forums (e.g., Klamath Fishery Management Council and North of Cape Falcon Forum) in which tribal representatives are directly recognized along with the other management entities. In contrast, the advisory subpanels generally consist of non-management representatives of the fishing industry, public, and conservation entities. In light of these facts, the open nature of subpanel deliberations, and the need for efficiency and effectiveness of the Council advisory process, the Council stated its intent to consider eliminating all tribal positions on the Salmon Advisory Subpanel at its June 2002 meeting. The Council clarified that this action does not affect the tribal fisherman position on the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel or tribal representation on the HC or any other advisory bodies.