

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE APRIL 2003 MEETING

Administrative Matters

Planning Session on Enhancing Communication with Fishing Communities

The Council heard an excellent presentation from Ms. Flaxen Conway of Oregon Sea Grant on communications between fisheries managers and the commercial and recreational fishing communities, challenges to communication, and ways to improve communication. The Council directed a small group (comprised of Council, NMFS, and Oregon Sea Grant staff) to develop a communications plan and present it to the Council at a future meeting.

Salmon Management

Identification of Stocks Not Meeting Escapement Goals for Three Consecutive Years

The Council confirmed that the Grays Harbor fall chinook stock qualifies as an exception to the requirement to develop a rebuilding plan under overfishing criteria, as Council fisheries have impacts of only 1.5% on this stock. Further, the Council endorsed the State of Washington and Northwest Treaty Tribe co-managers initiative to investigate factors contributing to not meeting the spawning escapement goal for three consecutive years.

Establish Salmon Model Documentation and Evaluation Process

The Council established a Salmon Model Evaluation Workgroup (MEW), containing seats from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Salmon Technical Team, and Scientific and Statistical Committee. Individuals appointed to these seats will be named in the near future. The MEW is not expected to meet prior to mid-May.

Methodology Review Process for 2003

The Council adopted six candidate issues for Scientific and Statistical Committee review during the fall of 2003. In priority order these issues are:

- chinook and coho FRAM documentation;
- coho FRAM fisheries for Canadian stocks;
- chinook FRAM for mark-selective fisheries;
- Columbia River fall chinook ocean abundance predictors;

- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife management plan for Lower Columbia River coho salmon; and
- Oregon coastal natural (OCN) coho salmon prediction methodology.

The Council asked the sponsoring agencies of each issue to provide detailed documentation by mid-September 2003 for any issue to be reviewed to the Council.

Final Action on 2003 Ocean Salmon Management Measures

The Council adopted salmon management measures for 2003 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 opportunity for adipose fin clipped coho, but there will be no chinook fishery in May and June as there was in 2002;
- seasons off central Oregon are similar to 2002, but with a significantly increased quota of adipose fin clipped coho salmon; and
- seasons in California are similar to 2002, although the Klamath Management Zone (KMZ) in northern California and southern Oregon has the first uninterrupted season since 1991.

In general, commercial seasons provide less chinook opportunity in areas north of the KMZ, and more opportunity south of the KMZ, including 26 days in July for the Fort Bragg area. Adipose fin clipped coho opportunity is also greater north of Cape Falcon than in 2002.

HABITAT ISSUES

Essential Fish Habitat Issues

The Council directed Council staff to send two letters developed by the Habitat Committee (HC). One is a letter to the Department of Interior regarding Klamath River flows and the other is a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regarding hydropower-relicensing issues. The Council also directed the HC to further investigate salmon net pen issues and provide a report at the next HC meeting.

GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT

Report on the Bycatch Workshop and Observer Data Update

The Council directed the Groundfish Management Team and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel to use preliminary observer-based bycatch rates (generated by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program during parts of 2001 and 2002) for modeling purposes for use by the Council as an indicator of the magnitude of adjustments needed for 2003 inseason management during the April Council meeting. Compared with logbook-based bycatch rates originally used to model 2003 groundfish annual specifications, observer-based bycatch rates generally show significantly higher estimated bycatch of some overfished species. Further, the Council directed the use of revised observer-based bycatch rates in the balance of 2003, as soon as the data is feasibly usable.

Review of the Process for Setting 2004 Groundfish Specifications

The Council adopted a two-meeting process to develop 2004 groundfish specifications. The first meeting will be the June 2003 Council meeting, where preliminary acceptable biological catch, optimum yield, and management measures are to be adopted. The second meeting is the September 2003 Council meeting, when final adoption is scheduled.

Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 16 – Rebuilding Plans

The Council adopted groundfish rebuilding plan amendments 16-1 and 16-2 for public review and final Council action at the June 2003 Council meeting. Amendment 16-1 describes the process and standards for groundfish rebuilding plans, and Amendment 16-2 contains rebuilding plans for darkblotched rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, lingcod, and canary rockfish.

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

The Council recommended that National Marine Fisheries Service provide a 60-day comment period for the proposed rule on VMS, which if adopted would allow public comment at the June Council meeting.

Standards and Criteria for Approving Exempted Fishing Permits

The Council adopted a process and standards protocol for a Council Operating Procedure on considering Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP), as described in Exhibit E.7, Supplemental Revised Attachment 2. The Council also adopted a timeline for use in considering EFP for the 2004-fishing year, which calls for initial concepts of any EFP proposals to be brought to the Council at the June 2003 meeting. Finalizing a future timeline for EFP proposals for fishing years 2005 and beyond will be considered by the Council at its June 2003 meeting.

Final Action on Groundfish Inseason Management

The Council adopted extensive changes to commercial trawl fisheries, in response to updated information on bycatch rates. Changes included the size of the Rockfish Conservation Areas, reduction in nearshore open periods, and alterations in trip limits. Specifics on these changes will be posted on the Council website at www.pccouncil.org in the near future.

Pacific Halibut Management

Adopt Final 2003 Incidental Catch Regulations for the Salmon Troll and Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries

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).

Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis – The Council adopted the status quo restrictions beginning May 1, license holders may land no more than 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.

Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area - For both the Salmon troll and sablefish longline fisheries, the Council approved a measure to voluntarily avoid fishing in the “C” shaped yelloweye rockfish conservation area in Washington Marine area 3.

Coastal Pelagic Species Management

Approve Final Regulatory Amendment and Analysis for Changes to the Sardine Allocation

The Council took final action on a regulatory amendment revising the sardine allocation framework. The Council adopted Alternative 3 as presented on page 5 of Exhibit G.2.b, the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team Report, as an interim revision to the Pacific Sardine Allocation Framework within the CPS FMP for the 2003 and 2004 seasons. Key components include changing the allocation dividing line from Point Piedras Blancas to Point Arena; and re-allocation of unused quota 80%-20% on September 1 and then coastwide December 1. This allocation regime would be extended to 2005 if the 2005 harvest guideline were at least 90% of the 2003

harvest guideline. The intent of the Council is for this action to be implemented in time to prevent premature closure of northern subarea sardine fisheries prior to reallocation of the harvest guideline.

CPS Stock Assessment Terms of Reference

The Council adopted terms of reference for a CPS stock assessment review (STAR) process, as proposed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee with minor changes. A CPS STAR Panel meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 2004. The 2004 STAR Panel will review stock assessments for Pacific mackerel and Pacific sardine.

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