

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE APRIL 2005 MEETING

Groundfish Management

Vermilion Rockfish Stock Assessment Status

The Council approved a full assessment for vermilion rockfish this year for 2007-2008 management decision-making. Previously, a data report was scheduled for vermilion rockfish due to missing input data, but a full assessment is now feasible with the provision of the missing catch data.

Inseason Management Response Policy

After considerable discussion, the Council declined to adopt a new inseason management response policy.

Terms of Reference for Groundfish Rebuilding Plan Analytical Review

The Council adopted a new Terms of Reference for groundfish rebuilding analyses that requires authors of rebuilding analyses to use the new version of the rebuilding simulation program, endorsed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), which provides the outputs necessary to evaluate the adequacy of rebuilding progress. The new Terms of Reference includes several other additions and deletions to the prior document; a new Terms of Reference document will be distributed by the Council in the near future.

Implementation of an Expanded Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

The Council delayed adoption of a preferred alternative on VMS expansion. The Council recommended addressing this matter again at the September 2005 meeting with fuller analysis identifying those segments of the open access fleet that have a relatively high proportion of groundfish landings, as opposed to true *de minimus* incidental catches. The Council also requested a review of the alternatives by the Ad Hoc Vessel Monitoring System Committee and the Coastal Pelagic Species and Highly Migratory Species advisory bodies.

Inseason Adjustments in the 2005 Groundfish Fisheries

The Council adopted the following inseason adjustments for the west coast groundfish fishery:

- Lower trawl trip limits for petrale sole, Dover sole, Other Flatfish, and arrowtooth flounder to avoid early attainment of petrale sole and Dover sole.
- Higher trawl trip limits for minor slope rockfish and splitnose rockfish and a 150-fm shoreward trawl Recreational Conservation Area boundary for the area between 40°10' N. latitude and 38° N. latitude since landings were well below pre-season projections.

- Clearer descriptions of allowable trawl gear configurations for the selective flatfish trawl and chafing gear to maintain the original intent of these gear requirements.
- More liberal seasons and depth zones for the California recreational groundfish fishery to match promulgated regulations in state waters based on the use of new 2004 California Recreational Fisheries Survey data and a California Department of Fish and Game risk assessment.

Control Date for the Longline Spiny Dogfish Fishery

The Council set a control date of April 8, 2005 for considering alternatives for limiting future participation in the longline spiny dogfish fishery. Implementation of this action is not expected prior to the 2009 season.

Salmon Management

Identification of Stocks Not Meeting Conservation Objectives

The Council took no action on this item as no stocks triggered either a Conservation Alert or an Overfishing Concern as defined in the Salmon Fishery Management Plan.

Methodology Review Process and Preliminary Topic Selection for 2005

The Council adopted the following items that the SSC may consider for the 2005 Salmon Methodology Review:

- Chinook and Coho Fishery Regulation Assessment Model (FRAM) documentation;
- Chinook FRAM validation/calibration;
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Oregon coastal natural (coho) matrix;
- Review of Klamath Ocean Harvest Model contact rates and catch projections;
- Columbia River fall chinook ocean abundance forecast;
- Klamath River natural fall chinook spawner escapement goal (this matter is scheduled for further discussion at the June Council meeting).

The final list of items will be determined at the September Council meeting, and the Review will occur prior to the November Council meeting.

Final Action on 2005 Salmon Management Measures

The Council adopted for submission to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), 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 management measures can be viewed on the Council web site www.pcouncil.org in the near future.

Pacific Halibut Management

Final 2005 Incidental Catch Regulations for the Salmon Troll and Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries

Salmon Troll

The Council adopted the same landing restrictions for Pacific halibut caught incidentally in the salmon troll fishery as were in place for 2004:

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).

A "C-shaped" yelloweye rockfish conservation area is an area to be avoided for salmon troll fishing. NMFS and the Council request that salmon trollers voluntarily avoid this area in order to protect yelloweye rockfish. The area is defined in the Pacific Council Halibut Catch Sharing Plan in the North Coast subarea (Washington marine area 3), with the following coordinates in the order listed:

48°18' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.;
48°18' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°11' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°11' N. lat.; 125°11' W. long.;
48°04' N. lat.; 125°11' W. long.;
48°04' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°00' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°00' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.;
And connecting back to 48°18' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.

Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery

The Council adopted the same landing limits on incidental halibut harvest in the fixed gear primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis as were in place for 2004:

Option 1 Status Quo: Beginning May 1, restrict incidental halibut landings to 100

pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to two additional halibut in excess of the 100 pounds per 1,000 pound ratio per landing. Retention of halibut allowed beginning May 1.

Habitat

Current Habitat Issues

The Council approved two letters addressing water management concerns related to salmon. One was a letter to Department of Interior Secretary Gale Norton regarding a balanced allocation of Klamath River basin water flows to address fishery resource needs. The other letter, to be released as per the Council fast track procedure after the Council meeting, pertains to Columbia River water management during the 2005 juvenile salmon out-migration.

Coastal Pelagic Species Management

Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 11 – Sardine Allocation

The Council approved a range of alternatives for the allocation of Pacific sardine for further analysis and public review. After reviewing preliminary results on the range of alternatives approved for analysis in November 2004 and reports of the Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) advisory bodies, the Council eliminated two alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 5) from further consideration. The Council recommended that the CPS Management Team follow the advice of the SSC as they complete the analysis of allocation alternatives for public review. The Council is scheduled to adopt a preferred alternative at the June meeting in Foster City, California.

Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (NMS)

The Council reviewed the Channel Islands NMS (CINMS) requested changes to the Sanctuaries Designation Document and directed Council staff to prepare a letter stating a recommendation that there be no changes in the Designation Document at this time and that the Council looks forward to working with the CINMS towards conclusion of their analytical documents on fishing regulations associated with marine reserve alternatives. The Council will make a decision on a preferred alternative when the analytical materials are available.

Cordell Bank, Gulf of Farallones, and Monterey Bay NMS

The Council reviewed the requested changes to the Designation Documents of these three Sanctuaries and directed the Council staff to prepare a response letter. Relative to Cordell Bank NMS (CBNMS) proposals, the Council does not support the proposed changes to the CBNMS Designation Document to allow the promulgation of fishing regulations. Relative to Monterey Bay NMS (MBNMS), the Council does not support changes to the MBNMS Designation Document to allow the promulgation of fishing regulations but is

supportive of changes to include the Davidson Seamount within the boundaries of the MBNMS. The letter will also state that the goals for protection from fishing impacts in these areas will be addressed in the Council processes under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Lastly, the Council letter will state qualified support for the non-fishing related Designation Document changes in the Gulf of the Farallones NMS.

Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management

Planning for FMP Implementation

The Council approved three meetings of the HMS Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS), and four meetings of the HMS Management Team, and tasked the Executive Director with exploring economical opportunities for a joint meeting of a subset of Council members of the Pacific and Western Pacific Fishery Management Councils. The Council tasked the HMSAS with providing a draft letter for the Council fast track approval process on issues relevant to the May 12, 2005 meeting of the U.S. Section of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. At the June Council meeting, the Council expects to review a first draft of a stock assessment and fishery evaluation report, reach a conclusion on a Big Eye Tuna overfishing response, and hear from the advisory bodies on priorities, timelines, and work progress for the other issues identified in the Situation Summary document for this agenda item for the April 2005 Council meeting. Lastly, the Council tasked the Executive Director with informing the State Department of the importance of Pacific HMS issues on the June Council meeting agenda.

Administrative Matters

Legislative Matters

The Council reviewed and approved the Legislative Committee's initial recommendations on Council priorities and positions for various issues associated with reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Council's position on this matter will be conveyed at the upcoming *Council Chairs and Executive Directors Meeting* in Dana Point, California, April 26-29, 2005 and will be refined at the June Council meeting.

Appointments to Advisory Bodies, Standing Committees, and Other Forums

Groundfish Allocation Committee

- The Council appointed Mr. Burr Heneman to a non-voting seat representing the conservation community.

Habitat Committee

- The Council appointed Mr. Bryant Chesney to the NMFS seat.

Council Chairs and Executive Directors Committee

- The Council appointed current RFMC Chairs and Executive Directors to the Council Chairs and Executive Directors Committee.

Draft June 2005 Council Meeting Agenda

The Council adopted the draft agenda for the June 2005 Council meeting to be held June 12-17, 2005 in Foster City, California. The draft agenda will be available on the Council website www.pcouncil.org during the month of May 2005.