

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE APRIL 2006 MEETING

SALMON MANAGEMENT

Identification of Stocks not Meeting Conservation Objectives

The Council confirmed the Klamath River fall Chinook stock has triggered a Conservation Alert according to the terms of the Salmon Fish Management Plan (FMP). Consequently, the Council directed the Executive Director to request that the California Department of Fish and Game, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Hoopa Valley Tribe, and Yurok Tribe conduct a formal review of the factors responsible for spawning escapement shortfalls in 2004, 2005, and the projected shortfall in 2006. This review is to be completed no later than March 2007. Further, the Council tasked the Executive Director with coordinating activities of the Habitat Committee to assist in this formal review.

The Council noted that Queets River spring/summer Chinook have not met their conservation objective in the last three years, but confirmed the Salmon Technical Team evaluation that the stock is an exception to the FMP Overfishing Criteria because Council area fisheries impacts are less than 5%. The Council requested Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Quinault Indian Nation provide an assessment of the cause of the shortfall.

Methodology Review Process and Preliminary Topic Selection for 2006

The Council adopted the following candidate items that the Scientific and Statistical Committee may consider for the 2006 Salmon Methodology Review:

- September 1 maturity boundary (“birth date”) for Klamath River fall Chinook;
- Chinook and Coho Fishery Regulation Assessment Model (FRAM) documentation;
- Columbia River fall Chinook ocean abundance forecast;
- Coweeman tule Chinook exploitation rate estimates;
- Oregon Coast Natural coho ocean abundance prediction methodology;
- Klamath Ocean Harvest Model contact rate and harvest estimates;
- Estimates of sea lion predation on Klamath fall Chinook;
- Experimental design for near-shore commercial salmon test fisheries.

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 2006 Salmon Management Measures

The Council adopted recommended salmon management measures off California, Oregon, and Washington for submission to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The management measures will require implementation by emergency rule. The detailed management measures can be viewed on the Council website www.pcouncil.org.

PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

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 2005:

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 2005:

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.

GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT

Management Specifications for 2007-2008 Fisheries

The Council adopted preferred (final) groundfish acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and optimum yields (OYs) for most species in 2007-2008 groundfish fisheries. A preferred range of OYs for the seven overfished species was adopted for additional analysis before final adoption in June. The Council also adopted for public review, draft amendatory language for the groundfish fishery management plan (FMP) with respect to the seven groundfish rebuilding plans. Final adoption of FMP amendatory language will occur in June 2006. The list of adopted ABCs, OYs, and draft FMP amendatory language will be posted in the near future on the Council's web site at www.pcouncil.org.

The Council also adopted a range of 2007-2008 groundfish management measures for analysis. These management measure alternatives will be analyzed for the ability to constrain fisheries to the harvest specifications adopted for 2007-2008, as well as the effects of the management measures on West Coast fish habitats, the West Coast marine ecosystem, and West Coast fishing economies and fishing communities. The alternative 2007-2008 groundfish management measures will soon be posted on the Council's web site at www.pcouncil.org. The Council will decide final 2007-2008 groundfish management measures in June.

Stock Assessment Planning for the 2009-2010 Fishing Season

The Council adopted the following list of groundfish stocks to be assessed next year for 2009-2010 management decision-making:

<u>Full Assessments</u>	<u>Updated Assessments</u>
Bocaccio Rockfish	Cowcod
Canary Rockfish	Widow Rockfish
Chilipepper Rockfish	Yelloweye Rockfish
Arrowtooth Flounder	Pacific Ocean Perch
Darkblotched Rockfish	English Sole
Sablefish	
Black Rockfish (coastwide)	
Longnose Skate	
Spiny Dogfish	

The Council also adopted a Terms of Reference for the next round of groundfish stock assessments. This Terms of Reference will be posted on the Council's web site at www.pcouncil.org in the near future.

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The Council adopted the following inseason adjustments to ongoing groundfish fisheries:

- South of 42° N. lat.- allow 2 1-pound weights for limited entry (LE) and open access fixed gears targeting Other Flatfish.
- South of 40°10' N. lat.- allow a separate small footrope 500 pound/month chilipepper rockfish trip limit for LE trawl.
- Decrease the Daily-Trip-Limit (DTL) bimonthly limit for sablefish to 3,000 pounds and task the GMT to review effort shifts into this fishery and consider increased DTL limits in June.

Highly Migratory Species Management

Bigeye Tuna Overfishing Response

The Council adopted the recommendations of the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) as their response to bigeye tuna overfishing. This includes communicating a position on measures to end overfishing in the Eastern Pacific Ocean to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) General Advisory Committee for consideration by the U.S. delegation, including reducing efforts on juvenile bigeye tuna by the purse seine fishery. Any IATTC action should allow an exemption for an incidental catch allowance for fisheries off the West Coast catching negligible amounts of bigeye. In addition, the Council will request the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council to incorporate these measures into their pelagic fishery management plan Amendment 14, which is a Pacific-wide response to bigeye overfishing.

Albacore Management

The Council delayed formulating a recommendation to NMFS on a negotiating position for the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty and provided direction to the HMSMT to develop information to support developing a recommendation. Council and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) members involved in the negotiating process will report back to the Council at their June 2006 meeting as to the status of an April 2006 negotiation session with Canada. The Council scheduled further considerations for the June Council meeting in Foster City, California.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Consultation Procedures for Fishery Regulation in National Marine Sanctuaries

The Council reviewed the NOAA proposal for an improved coordination mechanism regarding fishing regulations in National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS) and approved a response to be submitted in writing by April 30, 2006. Council recommendations include increased Regional Fishery Management Council (RFMC) input during the development of sanctuary goals and objectives, earlier distribution of complete documents to be used in final decision-making, and extension of the RFMC review periods to 180 days to incorporate two RFMC meetings.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Appointments to Advisory Bodies, Standing Committees, and Other Forums, Including any Necessary Changes to Council Operation Procedures

The Council appointed Ms. Becky Renko to the Northwest Region seat on the Groundfish Management Team, replacing Ms. Carrie Nordeen. With regard to filling the vacant northern processor seat on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel, the Council deferred action until the June meeting. A request for nominations to this position will be issued by Council staff.

The Council also considered and approved a change in the membership specifications for the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (Council Operating Procedure 3). The change replaces the vacant Southwest Fisheries Science Center seat with a Southwest Region seat. Mr. Craig Heberer was appointed to fill the vacancy for the newly designated seat.

June 2006 Council Meeting Agenda and Three-Meeting Outlook

In view of the workload and likely floor time necessary to prepare and complete the core action issues to be considered at its June meeting, the Council has significantly pared down the breadth of items to be included on its June agenda, especially in regard to groundfish management. Final adoption of the groundfish specifications and management measures for the 2007-2008 fishery season will consume the bulk of the Council's attention. In addition, groundfish issues will include a review and approval of the Stage I Trawl Individual Quota Document and any needed inseason management changes. Agenda items for salmon and highly migratory and coastal pelagic species remain similar to those presented in earlier planning documents. A complete draft agenda will be available on the website in the near future.