

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE JUNE 2004 MEETING

Groundfish Management

Final Consideration of 2004 Inseason Adjustments

The Council reviewed the status of 2004 groundfish fisheries and recommended several inseason adjustments.

- 1) At the April meeting, sablefish tier limits were incorrectly calculated resulting in tier limits that were too high with significant risk of exceeding the optimum yield (OY). In response, the Council adopted corrections to the sablefish tier limits that will reduce projected landings.
- 2) In response to elevated catches of canary rockfish in one sector of the Pacific whiting fishery, the Council recommended vessels voluntarily avoid areas of known high canary rockfish bycatch in the Pacific whiting fishery and requested NMFS develop an emergency rule to take inseason action to close appropriate whiting sectors if projected canary rockfish impacts reach 7.3 mt.
- 3) Trawl landings are tracking above projections and the Council adopted reduced trip limits for sablefish, shortspine thornyheads, Dover sole, and petrale sole.
- 4) To address discard issues, limited entry fixed gear and trawl limits were increased (a) in central California for bocaccio and chilipepper; and (b) for lingcod and minor shelf species north of 40°10' N. lat.; these increases will not exceed the OY for these species.
- 5) The Council also adopted several minor housekeeping corrections to existing regulations.

A complete list of inseason recommendations will be posted at the Council website www.pcouncil.org in the near future.

Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Analytical Framework – Fishing Gear Impact Model Component

Based on advice from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Council approved components of the fishing impact model for use in developing and evaluating alternatives for the EFH EIS. The Council also endorsed a meeting of the Ad Hoc Groundfish Fishery Management Plan EIS Oversight Committee in August 2004 to develop alternatives for the EFH EIS. The Council also directed the Executive Director to consult with the EFH EIS project coordinator to convene a meeting of the Ad Hoc Habitat Technical Review Committee (TRC) to review the habitat suitability probability maps produced by the EFH designation model for accuracy and to identify needed corrections; and to include the SSC, Groundfish Management Team (GMT), and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) in a review of the TRC recommendations for corrections. The EFH EIS project leader will work to schedule the TRC initial review, so results would be available for the EIS Oversight Committee meeting scheduled for August.

Preliminary Consideration of Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Applications for 2005/2006

The Council reviewed draft applications for EFPs to be conducted in 2005. Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife proposed EFPs for arrowtooth trawl and dogfish longline studies; and Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and California Dept. of Fish and Game proposed continued investigations with selective flatfish trawl gear. Some of these concepts are proposed as placeholders at this time pending EFP results in 2004 and progress on implementing EFP results into regulations. The Council will consider harvest set-asides for EFP concepts in combination with final action on management measures for 2005-2006.

Monitoring Program Alternatives for the Shore-based Pacific Whiting Fishery

The Council adopted for public review a preliminary range of alternatives for a permanent monitoring program for the shore-based Pacific whiting fishery. The range of alternatives was modified to address the concerns of the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel and the Enforcement Consultants. Final Council action on this matter is scheduled for September, when the Council identifies a preferred alternative.

Update on Trawl Individual Quota (TIQ) Program

Scoping hearings for a trawl IQ environmental impact statement will be held as follows:

- July 20, 2004 in Seattle, Washington; and
- July 27, 2004 in Newport, Oregon.

Final Adoption of 2005/2006 Groundfish Management Measures

The Council adopted final 2005/2006 groundfish management measures including the following highlights. A more detailed list of 2005/2006 management measures will soon be available on the Council's website (www.pcouncil.org) and in the Council's summer newsletter.

- 1) A new selective flatfish trawl gear will be implemented north of 40°10' N. latitude in January 2005, which will allow greater access to fishing grounds closed since late 2002 with a significantly decreased bycatch of overfished shelf rockfish species such as canary rockfish. It is noteworthy that with the exclusive use of selective trawl gear shoreward of the Rockfish Conservation Area, the limited entry trawl fishery is predicted to be constrained by attainment of target species rather than bycatch of overfished species for the first time in many years.
- 2) Status quo (2004) management measures for limited entry fixed gear, open access, Oregon recreational, and Washington recreational fisheries with the exception of new recreational harvest guidelines for canary rockfish, lingcod, and yelloweye rockfish.
- 3) California recreational fisheries will be more regionally stratified in 2005 and 2006 with conservative seasons designed to stay within new harvest guidelines for constraining stocks. It is expected that new California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS) data

will be available late this year and during the 2005-2006 management period to allow for routine adjustment of that fishery to stay within harvest guidelines.

Habitat Issues

Current Habitat Issues

The Council directed staff to coordinate with NMFS Southwest Region to prepare a letter to the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation and California Department of Water Resources on the essential fish habitat conservation recommendations relative to in-stream water management within California's Central Valley Project. This letter is expected to be prepared via the Council "fast track" procedure between the June and September Council meetings.

Coastal Pelagic Species Management

Pacific Mackerel Harvest Guideline for the 2004/2005 Season

The Council adopted the following management measures for the July 2004-June 2005 Pacific mackerel fishery:

- 1) Total fishery harvest guideline of 13,268 mt;
- 2) Directed fishery guideline of 9,100 mt;
- 3) Set-aside for incidental catches of 4,168 mt and an incidental catch rate limit of 40% when mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species (CPS), except that up to one mt of Pacific mackerel can be landed without landing any other CPS.

The Council also requested NMFS track utilization of the directed fishery guideline and advise the Council at the March 2005 meeting if additional action (e.g. a mop-up fishery) is warranted.

Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment—Sardine Allocation

The Council initiated an amendment to the CPS FMP. The primary purpose of the FMP amendment will be allocation of the coastwide Pacific sardine harvest guideline. The Council discussed a schedule that included final Council action on the FMP amendment by June 2005, which would enable implementation by January 2006. To facilitate development of the amendment, the Council directed the CPS Advisory Subpanel to draft a range of alternative sardine allocation scenarios. Council staff will publish notice in the *Federal Register* of the Council's intention to develop an FMP amendment related to Pacific sardine allocation, including solicitation of public comment.

The Council also directed the CPS Management Team to formally review the CPS FMP issues raised by NMFS to identify issues that could be addressed through amendment to the CPS FMP and if they could be addressed in the short-term or would require more extensive time to complete.

The Council scheduled a progress report at the September 2004 meeting on both the sardine allocation matter and the potential addition of other CPS issues to an FMP amendment.

Marine Protected Areas

Federal Waters Portion of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) Schedule Update

The Council received an update from CINMS staff on their schedule for considering marine reserves within federal waters of CINMS. This process will result in a formal EIS developed by CINMS with input from the Council. According to current planning, the CINMS would ask the Council for formal comment on completing the range of alternatives and analytical elements of a draft EIS at the November Council meeting.

To inform Council consideration of CINMS proposals and analyses, the Council requested the SSC marine protected area subcommittee to meet during July 2004, Council advisory subpanels and the Habitat Committee to complete their review of materials by the September Council meeting, and for the Ad Hoc Channel Islands Marine Reserve Committee to meet in early October 2004.

At the November 2004 Council meeting, the Council anticipates a progress report from CINMS and reports from Council advisory committees described above.

Guidelines for Review of Marine Reserves Issues

The Council commended the SSC for their work to date on the draft "white paper." Recognizing the importance of the SSC document, and the need to fully account for public and agency comment about the document, the Council directed the SSC to thoroughly review comments received and finalize the document for Council consideration at the September 2004 meeting. Further, the Council tasked the SSC with briefly responding to comments received in writing, as part of their materials for the September Council meeting.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) Krill Harvest Ban Proposal

The Council initiated consideration of prohibiting directed fisheries for krill and, potentially, other forage species. Council staff will work with NMFS Southwest Region and NOAA-General Counsel to develop information about procedural mechanisms for prohibiting fishing for krill and other forage species within the West Coast U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. The Council will review this information and provide further guidance at the September 2004 meeting.

Administrative and Other Matters

Council Communication Plan – Phase I (Communication During Council Session)

The Council directed staff to report at the September Council meeting on the feasibility, potential financial cost, and timetable for acting on the recommendations included in Phase I of the Communications Plan. Further, the Council directed staff to make a recommendation for a timetable for Phases II and III of the Communication Plan.

Appointments to Advisory Bodies, Standing Committees and Other Forums

The Council approved the following appointments to its advisory bodies to replace recent vacancies:

Groundfish Management

Ms. Susan Ashcraft – California Department of Fish and Game Representative

Scientific and Statistical Committee

Dr. David Sampson – Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Representative