

DECISION SUMMARY DOCUMENT
PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

JUNE 20-25, 2014

Council Meeting Decision Summary Documents are highlights of decisions made at Council meetings. For a more detailed account of Council meeting discussions, see the [Council meeting minutes and voting logs](#) or the [Council newsletter](#).

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Boundary Expansion

The Council heard a presentation on the proposed boundaries expansion, and asked Council staff to develop a comment letter expressing strong concern about the proposed expansion. Six Council advisory body statements will be appended to the letter, to be submitted by the close of the comment period on June 30, 2014.

Legislative Matters

The Council approved the Legislative Committee Report with some minor changes, and directed staff to forward the points made in the report to principals in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. The Council also approved comments on proposed legislation should the Council be asked for comment over the course of the summer. The Council also directed the Legislative Committee (LC) to review new recommendations made by the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel, Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel, and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel at the LC's next meeting in September, together with any developing legislation over the summer.

Fiscal Matters

The Council approved a calendar year 2014 budget which should maintain near status quo operations for the year.

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

The Council elected Ms. Dorothy Lowman and Mr. Herb Pollard to the positions of Council Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the 2014-2015 term.

The Council appointed Mr. Alan Byrne to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game seat on the Scientific and Statistical Committee replacing Dr. Charlie Petrosky.

The Council appointed Mr. Dave Bitts to the California Commercial Troll seat on the Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) for the remainder of the 2013-2015 term.

The Council appointed Mr. Greg Johnson to the Commercial Gillnet seat on the SAS for the remainder of the 2013-2015 term.

The Council announced vacancies for the Charter/Sport seat on the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel and the Southern Processor seat on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel. Interested parties should monitor the Council website for details on the vacancies and application procedures,

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for September 2014 in Spokane, Washington. A single page proposed agenda summary is scheduled to be available on the Council website during July 2014 and a draft detailed proposed agenda to be by late August.

SALMON MANAGEMENT

Lower Columbia River Natural Coho Harvest Matrix

The Council received an update from the Lower Columbia River Natural Coho (LCR) Workgroup and was supportive of initial work products. The Council directed the LCR Workgroup to continue with development of alternative harvest matrices and analysis of their associated risks to Lower Columbia River natural coho as per the Workgroup's proposed schedule for meeting and work products, and points made during the Council floor discussion. Additionally, the Council tasked the Workgroup with drafting a purpose and need statement based on Council discussion and to include specifically the purpose of bringing forward new information on stock status into risk analyses and policy decisions made about a decade ago.

Columbia River Cormorant Management Plan

The Council directed the Executive Director to write a letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) by August 4, 2014 supporting Alternative C, which calls for direct lethal means as the best means of achieving the goals of the current NMFS Biological Opinion relative to reducing the double-crested cormorant population to about 5,500 nesting pairs, so as to reduce predation on juvenile salmonids. The Council also directed a letter be sent to NMFS expressing the Council's opinion that while reducing the cormorant population at East Sand Island to levels stated in their Biological Opinion was a positive step in managing predation, the Biological Opinion should be reissued to further reduce target nesting population sizes to levels observed prior to the island's enlargement by the USACE, so as to realign cormorant predation on salmon to historical natural levels and allow for alternatives such as reducing the size of East Sand Island to its original size.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Update on Regulatory Matters and International Activities

The Council tasked Council staff with sending a letter to the U.S. Section of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) with recommendations on Pacific bluefin tuna catch reductions, further development of a precautionary approach for northern albacore tuna, compliance with effort control measures (with particular reference to activities by China), and compliance in catch reporting from all countries. The Council made the following specific recommendation to the U.S. Section of the IATTC with regard to Pacific bluefin tuna:

1. Limit the Commission-wide commercial catch to 3,000 metric tons (mt) in 2015 and to 2,500 mt in 2016.
2. Provide for protection from intercepting fisheries to secure access by the U.S. commercial fleet to the Pacific bluefin tuna stock in order to maintain an economically viable fishery.
3. Notice IATTC countries that a reduction in the U.S. recreational fishing mortality to an appropriate level will occur through the PFMC process (e.g., a reduction in bag limits).

The Council directed staff to work through U.S. delegations to the IATTC and WCPFC to continue developing a precautionary management framework for North Pacific albacore tuna, including (1) in the IATTC arena by supporting a revised NMFS proposal for a resolution dealing with the analysis of target and limit reference points, and (2) pursuing discussion and negotiation of elements in the *Draft Precautionary Management Approach for North Pacific Albacore* in both the IATTC and WCPFC arenas and inter-sessionally.

Drift Gillnet Fishery Transition Issues

The Council enumerated a set of policy objectives for managing the West Coast swordfish fishery under full Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) authority for 2014 and beyond:

- Reduce bycatch in the California drift gillnet (DGN) fishery through the use of hard caps for high priority protected species (marine mammals and sea turtles) and measures to reduce discard of other species. If hard caps are reached or exceeded during a fishing season, the fishery would be closed for the remainder of the season. Hard caps are to be evaluated for the following species: fin, humpback, and sperm whales; and leatherback, loggerhead, olive ridley, and green turtles.
- Establish a control date of June 23, 2014, for purposes of possibly considering a future federal DGN limited entry program under MSA authority.
- Increase observer coverage rates above 2013 levels for the DGN fishery to facilitate implementation of bycatch reduction measures such as hard caps. The beginning of the 2016/2017 DGN fishing season is identified as a target for implementing full monitoring and accountability through onboard observers and/or electronic monitoring systems.
- Support collaboration between fishing communities, agencies, scientists, and nongovernmental organizations to develop alternative fishing gears, conduct research to further minimize bycatch in the DGN fishery, maintain a viable domestic West Coast highly migratory species fishery, and reduce capacity in the DGN fishery through buyouts or other incentives.
- Explore regulatory amendments that would remove exemptions for unobservable vessels in the DGN fishery.
- Routinely review DGN fishery performance to evaluate its ability to operate within hard cap levels and successfully minimize bycatch of other discard species according to bycatch performance standards to be adopted by the Council.
- Evaluate future access to Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area (PLCA) in light of full accountability and acceptable bycatch cap levels.

Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Process

The Council will solicit EFP proposals to test alternative gear types or new approaches for using pelagic drift gillnet gear through a widely circulated notice. The due date for EFP proposals will be August 15. The Council will initially review proposals at the September 2014 meeting and make final recommendations to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on issuance of EFPs at the November 2014 meeting.

The Council adopted evaluation criteria for solicited EFP proposals based on recommendations from the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT). In addition, EFP proposals should be compatible with the policy directives identified by the Council under Agenda Item E.2, Drift Gillnet Fishery Transition Issues, with particular reference to the objectives of maintaining commercially viable HMS target fisheries and minimizing bycatch. Details of these evaluation criteria will be included in the public notice.

All EFP activities should be designed for 100 percent monitoring and applicants are asked to express their willingness to test electronic monitoring systems and their willingness and ability to pay the costs associated with observer coverage.

Initial Scoping of Biennial Specifications and Management Measures

The Council identified a preliminary list of issues for further consideration through the current biennial process or by a separate process with a different timeline, if necessary. The HMSMT will provide information about potential elements of alternatives the Council could consider, options for the optimal process of consideration, a preliminary evaluation of potential regulatory actions and associated workload necessities. The highest priority was assigned

to examining hard caps for the DGN fishery, with the presumption that the Pacific bluefin recreational catch limit issue being addressed in the current biennial process.

1. For the California DGN fishery, establish hard caps for high priority protected species (fin, humpback and sperm whales; and leatherback, loggerhead, olive ridley and green turtles) and adopt measures to reduce discard of other species.
2. Reduce recreational catch of Pacific bluefin tuna by modifying current trip limits and possession limits and/or other recreational management measures.
3. Increase the transmission (ping) rate for vessel monitoring system units on vessels in the California DGN fishery.
4. Management of the pelagic longline fishery:
 - a. Achieve fishing opportunity comparable to the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery for HMS permit holders using longline gear outside the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ);
 - b. Authorize a pelagic longline fishery inside the EEZ, which is currently prohibited by the HMS fishery management plan (FMP).
5. Transition the current California limited entry permit program for DGN vessels to a Federal limited entry permit program under the HMS FMP.
6. Establish a requirement for all DGN vessels to carry an observer or electronic monitoring system.

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

Electronic Monitoring Regulatory Process

The Council refined the alternatives and options for an electronic monitoring program for the groundfish trawl Shorebased IFQ program (Agenda Item F.2.a, Attachment 1, Table 2.1) http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/F2a_Att1_EM_DecisionDoc_JUNE2014BB.pdf) and assigned focused analyses for several options. The specifics of the Council action will be the subject of a blog on the Council website in the near future at <http://www.pcouncil.org/2014/06/31331/em-june2014-mt/>. The Council is scheduled to consider final action on any regulatory alternatives considered sufficiently developed at the September 2014 Council meeting for any sector, and to consider a schedule for remaining alternatives or sectors.

Omnibus Regulation Changes

The Council recommended that the adaptive management program quota pound (QP) pass through (which includes halibut individual bycatch quota QP) continue through the completion of the five-year review and implementation of any regulations resulting from that review. Additionally, the Council began a two-meeting process to evaluate existing groundfish workload and determine which new management measures could be analyzed in the next year (i.e., before the process to establish the 2017-2018 specifications begins) and over the long term. The Council adopted a list of candidate actions (see <http://tinyurl.com/mqtul3f>) and in September the Council is scheduled to prioritize measures from the existing list, determine the groups in which issues will be packaged for moving through the Council process, and identify a calendar for those packages.

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The Council considered the performance of the 2014 fishery and recommended the following inseason adjustments for NMFS timely implementation. For the limited entry fixed gear sablefish fishery north of 36° N. latitude increase the trip limits to 1 landing per week of up to 1,000 lb., not to exceed 3,000 lb. per 2 months. For the open access fixed gear sablefish fishery north of 36° N. Latitude, increase the trip limits to 350 lb. per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 1,600 lb., not to exceed 3,200 lb. per 2 months.

Final Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Approval for 2015-2016

The Council recommended NMFS implement five exempted fishing permit proposals; one proposal to test a vertical hook-and-line gear configuration within the non-trawl RCA in waters off central and northern California to selectively target yellowtail and chilipepper rockfish, and four proposals to test electronic monitoring (EM) in the groundfish trawl Shorebased IFQ fishery ([Agenda Item F.5.a, Attachments 1 through 5](#)). The Council provided several recommendations to NMFS regarding permit conditions and reporting requirements for the four EM EFP proposals.

Fixed Gear Sablefish Catch Share Program Review, Including Federal Electronic Fish Tickets for Open Access Sablefish Deliveries

The Council adopted the limited entry fixed gear program review document ([F.6.a, Attachment 1](#)), including recommendations for future consideration of a permit price reporting requirement and that another review be scheduled in seven years. Four additional issues were recommended for consideration in the omnibus workload planning agenda item in September: conversion of daily trip limits to a tier endorsement, combining longline and fishpot limited entry gear endorsements into a single fixed gear endorsement, moving the seaward line of the Rockfish Conservation Area closer to shore for pot vessels, and requiring that all fishpots be returned to shore at the end of each trip. On the three-permit own/hold limit, the Council adopted the NMFS-recommended alternative ([Supplemental NMFS Report 2](#)) and Collective Ownership Suboption 2. On the electronic fish ticket requirement, the Council adopted Alternative 4, which requires electronic fish tickets for all limited entry and open access landings that include sablefish (limited entry permit numbers would be included on the electronic fish tickets).

Fisheries in 2015-2016 and Beyond: Harvest Specifications, Management Measures, and Amendment 24

The Council adopted final 2015-2016 harvest specifications and management measures and Amendment 24, which would amend the fishery management plan (FMP) to include default harvest control rules that would be used in future biennia, unless modified by the Council, to establish harvest specifications. Amendment 24 also designates some FMP species as ecosystem component species. More detailed information on Council final action will be available in the reasonably near future.

Initial Stock Assessment Plans and Terms of Reference for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species

The Council adopted the following assessments to be conducted in 2015 for public review:

Full assessments:

- 1) Black rockfish
- 2) Bocaccio
- 3) Canary rockfish
- 4) Darkblotched rockfish
- 5) Widow rockfish
- 6) China rockfish
- 7) Cowcod
- 8) Kelp greenling

Update assessments:

- 1) Petrale sole
- 2) Sablefish

The Council signaled their intent to consider the black rockfish assessment as a two-area assessment, the kelp greenling assessment only for the population off Oregon, and sablefish assessment either as a full or an update

assessment. Further, there may be consideration for an update or data-moderate assessment for arrowtooth flounder. Final decisions on stock assessment priorities, as well as modifications to the three Terms of Reference guiding future decisions on harvest specifications for groundfish and coastal pelagic species will be made in September.

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Pacific Mackerel Harvest Specifications and Management Measures for 2014-2015

The Council adopted a Pacific mackerel catch-only biomass projection estimate of 157,106 mt, and an overfishing limit (OFL) of 32,992 mt. Based on the biomass estimate and a P* choice of 0.45, the Council set the acceptable biological catch (ABC) as well as the annual catch limit (ACL) equal to 30,138 mt, a harvest guideline (HG) set equal to 29,170 mt, an ACT of 24,170 mt, and a 5,000 mt incidental set-aside.

Should the directed fishery realize the annual catch target (ACT) (24,170 mt), the directed fishery will close, and shift to an incidental-only fishery, with a 45 percent incidental landing allowance when Pacific mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species (CPS), with the exception that up to 1 mt of Pacific mackerel could be landed without landing any other CPS. The Council also adopted a check-in provision, tentatively scheduled for March 2015, to consider reallocating a portion of the set-aside to the directed fishery, should the directed fishery attain the ACT.

HABITAT

Current Habitat Issues

The Council approved sending four letters proposed by the Habitat Committee (HC) as presented in Council Briefing Book materials as drafts and discussed on the Council floor session: the letter on Klamath water flows (see [Agenda Item H.1.a, Supplemental Attachment 6](#)); the letter on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (see [Supplemental Attachment 3](#)); the letter to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, with the edits proposed by the HC in [Attachment 5](#) together with a reiteration of the Council's past comments on the importance of proper hatchery mitigation; and a letter on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to Principle Power. The Council also approved sending the HC's comments on the National Marine Sanctuary expansion, as presented in [Supplemental HC Report 2](#).

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