

Decision Summary Document
Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting
September 12-17, 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](#).

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Pacific Sardine Harvest Fraction

The Council considered a preliminary draft environmental assessment on Pacific sardine harvest fraction, but did not select a preliminary preferred alternative. The Council tasked the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team with developing more direct harvest policy comparisons between (1) the four alternatives using the CalCOFI temperature data, the new temperature-recruitment relationship, and the more recent time series, and (2) the status quo use of the Scripps Pier temperature data, the prior temperature-recruitment relationship; and an earlier time series. Council final action is scheduled for the November Council meeting.

SALMON MANAGEMENT

Salmon Methodology Review

The Council approved the following five preliminary topics identified in April for review this fall.

- Willapa Bay natural coho conservation objective, annual catch limit and status determination criteria.
- Southern Oregon coastal Chinook conservation objective.
- Standardized method for calculation of age-2 Fishery Regulation Assessment Model (FRAM) stock scalars.
- Progress report on new Chinook FRAM base period.
- New conservation objective for Grays Harbor Chinook.

Additionally the Council approved the following items for the methodology review.

- Estimated non-local Chinook stock impacts in terminal fisheries.
- Review of fishery impact estimation methodology relative to the Cape Flattery Control Zone.
- An update on the review of new methods for salmon economic analyses.

The annual methodology review meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 21-23, 2014 in Portland, Oregon.

Lower Columbia River Coho Harvest Matrix

The Council approved the following purpose statement for this action:

Council intent is to incorporate new information on Lower Columbia River natural coho populations and stock status, evaluate the risk of various harvest strategies on populations across the Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU), and determine if a revised harvest policy can be developed that simplifies existing harvest rules and optimizes fishing strategies consistent with acceptable conservation risk tolerances in coordination with the applicable state and federal recovery plans.

Working from [Agenda Item D.2.a, Supplemental Attachment 2](#), the Council expressed a general preference for new matrix options 4b, 5b, 6b, and 7.5b1. The full range of alternatives was adopted for public review. The Lower Columbia River Coho Workgroup analysis report will be updated and revised as appropriate between now and the November Council meeting where the Council is scheduled to adopt final recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for use in managing relevant salmon fisheries in 2015 and beyond.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

International Activities

The Council provided the following requests and recommendations to NMFS:

- Noting that the recent emergency closure to the commercial take of Pacific bluefin tuna was intended for directed fisheries, the Council requested NMFS issue an Emergency Rule as soon as possible providing for an incidental take of Pacific bluefin tuna for West Coast non-directed commercial fisheries, with a 1 metric ton (mt) per trip landing limit, to be closed if and when the remaining portion of the 500 mt quota has been caught. It is recommended the NMFS work closely with harvesters to enhance fishery monitoring in relation to the quota.
- The Council recommended NMFS work bilaterally with Mexico as soon as possible, including at the October Extraordinary Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meeting, to align recreational fishery management objectives and related strategies.
- The Council recommended the U.S. Delegation emphasize in the IATTC forum that the U.S. is moving to reduce the recreational catch of Pacific bluefin tuna under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), with the expectation that other countries will also respond to the conservation need, but to work toward not incorporating recreational measures in the expected IATTC resolution negotiation. The U.S. should continue to support a quota no less than 500 mt for aggregate West Coast commercial fisheries, as contained in the current IATTC Resolution.
- The Council recommended NMFS investigate ways in which the Council can be more directly involved in the stock assessment process conducted by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC), using Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) staff participating on ISC Working Groups as the conduit for information flow.

Preliminary Approval of Exempted Fishing Permits for 2015 Fisheries

The Council approved the proposed exempted fishing permit (EFP) described in [Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 4](#) for further development, and urged the proponents to develop as detailed a proposal as possible; NMFS and California Department of Fish and Wildlife offered assistance in proposal development. However, the Council decided to delay further approval of EFP applications until March 2015 and solicit additional applications in the interim. This was done with the understanding the Council would take final action on EFPs at that time for any acceptable EFPs and NMFS could issue the EFP in time for the swordfish season commencing in August 2015.

New or Routine Management Measures for 2015-2016 Fisheries

The Council adopted ranges of alternatives for management of the recreational fishery for Pacific bluefin tuna as follows:

- For reducing recreational daily bag limits and possession limits for Pacific bluefin tuna caught off California from the current 10 fish per day per angler bag limit (30 fish possession limit): alternatives below five fish per day and accompanying possession limits. A preliminary preferred alternative of a two-fish daily bag limit and a six-fish possession limit for multi-day trips was identified in this range.
- For processing recreationally caught tuna at sea south of Pt. Conception, three alternatives were identified: filleting in a manner that would allow both the number and species of tuna to be determined, heading and gutting only or gutting only, and not allowing processing of tunas. Allowing filleting in a manner that allows for subsequent species identification was selected as the preliminary preferred alternative (PPA).

For the at-sea filleting alternative, it is expected that the Enforcement Consultants will work with the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) is identifying a workable method that the Council will consider at the next Council meeting. Final action on Pacific Bluefin tuna recreational fishery management measures is scheduled for the November 2014 Council meeting.

The Council also selected ranges of alternatives for high priority protected species hard caps, finfish bycatch caps, and enhanced monitoring for the California drift gillnet fishery based on [Agenda Item G.4.b, HMSMT Report 3](#) and [Supplemental HMSMT Report 5](#). A preliminary preferred alternative was also identified that includes annual hard caps for fin, humpback, and sperm whales; and leatherback, loggerhead, olive ridley, and green sea turtles. For other protected species and finfish, the PPA establishes bycatch performance limits. Based on Council action, revised sets of alternatives will be brought forward at the November 2014 Council meeting for further consideration with the intent of final action in early 2015, with the understanding that NMFS would be able to implement any adopted measures by August 15, 2015.

Except for increasing the ping rate for vessel monitoring systems in the California drift gillnet (DGN) fishery, the other management issues identified by the Council in June 2014 will be further considered by the Council at the November 2014 Council meeting, with the intent to then identify a schedule for

final Council action outside of the highly migratory species (HMS) fishery management plan (FMP) biennial process. These issues include authorizing a shallow-set longline fishery outside the west coast exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and transitioning the current California limited entry permits for the DGN fishery to a federal limited entry program. The priority of further consideration of authorizing pelagic longline gear inside the west coast EEZ would be initially addressed through an exempted fishing permit process prior to any decision by the Council to amend the HMS FMP to permit this activity.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

Unmanaged Forage Fish Protection Initiative

The Council reaffirmed Alternative 2 as the preliminary preferred alternative. The Council approved draft Council Operating Procedure 24 and draft fishery management plan amendment language as modified by the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel, the Salmon Technical Team, and the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team for public review. Council final action on this fishery ecosystem plan initiative is currently scheduled for the March 2015 meeting.

GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT

Omnibus Regulation Change Priorities

The Council made decisions to prioritize workload associated with the omnibus of candidate management measures by removing or delaying current workload items and adding new items from the priorities shown in [Agenda Item J.1.b, NMFS Report 2](#). The Council adopted the action plans as described in [Agenda Item I.6.a., Supplemental Joint Council/NMFS Staff Report](#), with the exception of advancing an initial consideration of blackgill rockfish reallocation to the near term timeframe and adding consideration of past poundage quota share divestiture in the context of widow rockfish reallocation. Three matters were scheduled for the November 2014 Council meeting:

- Consideration of rescinding the 2009 Council decision on Amendment 22, dealing with a registry for open access fishery participants;
- Adoption of a range of alternatives for widow rockfish quota share reallocation as a result of its removal from an overfished designation, and consideration of related divestiture deadline issues; and
- Consideration of issues associated with the intersector allocation of blackgill rockfish, which is currently managed in the Slope Rockfish complex south of 40°10 N. latitude.

Consideration for updating gear regulations, including removing the requirement to use selective flatfish trawl gear shoreward of the RCA and a year-round midwater yellowtail fishery, is scheduled for 2015. The Council also scheduled for 2015 next consideration: regulations for a mid-water recreational sport fishery (Oregon and California); modifications to management area restrictions (in

conjunction with deliberations on the Essential Fish Habitat Amendment process); and various issues related to monitoring vessel movements in or near restricted fishing areas, including fishery declaration enhancements.

Stock Assessment Planning

The Council adopted three Terms of Reference ([Agenda Item J.2.a, Attachments 1, Attachment 2, and Attachment 3](#)) to guide the 2015-2016 groundfish and coastal pelagic species stock assessment process, as well as other processes that provide scientific information for management decision-making, as modified by recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in [Agenda Item J.2.b, Supplemental SSC Report](#).

The Council adopted the following plan for groundfish assessments:

- 1) Full Assessments: black rockfish, bocaccio, canary rockfish, China rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, kelp greenling (Oregon only), and widow rockfish. The assessments for black rockfish and China rockfish should be done to allow for consideration of state-specific management in 2017 and beyond. Council staff will coordinate a nearshore species data workshop with the SSC GF Subcommittee and state data stewards and scientists early next year to determine the best data for developing informative CPUE indices for assessments of black rockfish, China rockfish, and kelp greenling.
- 2) Update assessments: Petrale sole, sablefish, and chilipepper rockfish.
- 3) Data-moderate assessment of arrowtooth flounder using only the Extended Simple Stock Synthesis model and trawl survey indices to be reviewed by the SSC's Groundfish Subcommittee next June.
- 4) Catch reports for cowcod, Pacific ocean perch, and yelloweye rockfish.

The Council adopted the dates for 2015 groundfish Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panels as presented in [Agenda Item J.2.b, Supplemental NMFS PowerPoint](#) with the understanding the stocks to be reviewed in each of those panels may be subject to change.

The Council also tasked the SSC to consider the question of whether future data-moderate assessments should be reviewed in a STAR panel process or by the SSC's Groundfish Subcommittee on a case-by-case basis.

Electronic Monitoring Regulatory Process Final Preferred Alternatives and Next Steps

The Council selected final preferred alternatives for electronic monitoring (EM) for the whiting midwater trawl, non-whiting midwater trawl, fixed gear, and bottom trawl fisheries as recommended by the Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee's (GEMPAC) [Supplemental GEMPAC Report J.3.b](#), with some additions and modifications. A complete description of the requirements for each fishery is contained in a Council website blog that provides more information on the Council action: www.pccouncil.org/2014/09/32632/em-sept2014-decision/.

For the whiting fishery sector, the Council's intent was to have regulations applicable fleetwide in place by the 2016 season, with a verification of the Council decisions to occur in 2015 after review of any relevant 2015 EFP results. At its 2015 Council meeting (September or November), language in the final proposed rule stage could be changed and all necessary final decision documents will be deemed appropriate by the Council in association with formal transmittal of the Council action under the MSA.

For the fixed gear, bottom trawl, and non-whiting midwater trawl sectors, the Council intent was to strive for implementation as soon as possible, but with an expectation that 2017 might be the earliest possible year of fleet-wide applicability. EFP results expected from the 2015 and 2016 EFP seasons will be used to verify the Council's preferred alternatives. The Council tasked Council staff with continuing to monitor both EFP results and progress building the necessary EM infrastructure capabilities, and to provide updates to the Council as appropriate. The Council also provided guidance to NMFS regarding conservation and accountability aspects of the EM Program.

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The Council considered the performance of the 2014 fishery and determined that no inseason adjustments were necessary at this time.

PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

2015 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and Regulations

The Council adopted for public review a range of six non-treaty commercial and recreational fishery allocation options intended to provide for a greater recreational allocation for the California subarea, in response to new information indicating a higher abundance of Pacific Halibut and greater fishery interest in this area than when the catch sharing plan was originally adopted. Changes to recreational fishery management measures for Washington, Oregon, and California, including season dates or days open, were also adopted for public review. Detailed descriptions of the options will be available on the Council's website soon. Final Council action is scheduled for the November 2014 Council meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Legislative Matters

The Council directed Staff to send a letter to Senator Murkowski as outlined in the Legislative Committee report ([Agenda Item I.1.b, Supplemental LC Report](#)) responding to her request for comment on the Improved National Monument Designation Process Act (S. 2608).

Comments on Executive Actions

The Council directed staff to send a letter to President Obama commenting on his Executive Action to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. The letter will emphasize the importance of transparency and coordination with regional fishery management councils when

designating national monuments, as well as the need to consider the wide range of benefits derived from the natural resources being protected prior to final decision making.

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

The Council made the following advisory body appointments:

Mr. Steve Crooke to the Sport/Charter seat on the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel.

Mr. Dave Rudie to the South of Cape Mendocino Processor seat on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel.

Ms. Jessi Doerpinghaus to one of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife seat on the Groundfish Management Team,

The Council also directed staff to solicit nominations for the vacant at-large seat on the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Interested parties should monitor the Council website for details on the vacancy and application procedures,

The Council adopted an updated management schedule for Coastal Pelagic Species fisheries in Council Operating Procedure 9.

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for November 2014 in Costa Mesa, California. A single page proposed agenda summary is scheduled to be available on the Council website during October 2014 and a draft detailed proposed agenda to be by early November.

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