

Decision Summary Document
Pacific Fishery Management Council
November 14-19, 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](#).

OPEN COMMENT PERIOD

Comments on Non-Agenda Items

The Council directed staff to send two letters detailing concerns about the proposed closure of the United States Coast Guard air facility in Newport, Oregon, which would eliminate the rescue helicopter capabilities operating out of that station, and making the recommendation that closure of the air facility be rescinded. One letter is to be addressed to the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Paul Zunkunft with particular emphasis on safety at sea as a justification for maintaining status quo helicopter deployment capabilities. A separate letter is to be addressed to Senator Jeff Merkley in response to his request for a Pacific Council perspective on this issue, with particular emphasis on possible fiscal or legislative solutions.

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Sardine Harvest Fraction

The Council adopted a Final Preferred Alternative for the Pacific sardine harvest fraction parameter that utilizes the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations (CalCOFI) temperature index and associated temperature-productivity relationship. The adopted harvest fraction parameter ranges from 5-20 percent, utilized within the bounds of the full control rule. It is intended that this Harvest Control Rule will be applied to the 2015-2016 sardine harvest specifications and management measures, scheduled to be set by the Council at its April 2015 meeting.

SALMON MANAGEMENT

Salmon Methodology Review

The Council adopted the following methods for use in salmon management:

- Status determination criteria for Willapa Bay natural coho of $F_{MSY}=0.74$ and $S_{MSY}=17,200$.
- An escapement goal for Grays Harbor fall Chinook of $S_{MSY} = 13,326$ comprised of an $S_{MSY}=9,753$ for the Chehalis River and an $S_{MSY}=3,573$ for the Humptulips River.
- A conservation objective for southern Oregon coastal Chinook of at least 41,000 naturally produced adults passing Huntley Park in the Rogue River, an S_{MSY} of 34,992, a maximum fishing mortality threshold of 54 percent, and a minimum stock size threshold of 18,440 (or 20,500 at Huntley Park) which is 53 percent of the S_{MSY} .
- A method of developing Age-2 abundance scalars as inputs to the Chinook Fishery Regulation Assessment Model (FRAM) in cases where formal age-2 forecasts are not made. The Council directed Council staff to send a letter that requests the appropriate co-managers provide the

Council with the method they intend to use for the 2015 management cycle no later than January 31, 2015.

- A method for calculating impacts in FRAM for three Chinook stocks (George Adams, Nisqually, and mid-Puget Sound) that result from the closure of the Cape Flattery Control Zone. Preliminary Council guidance is to apply a 25 percent reduction in estimated impacts as a result of the closure.
- The use of Input-Output Model for Pacific Coast Fisheries (IO-PAC) for commercial salmon fisheries.

Preseason Salmon Management Schedule for 2015

The Council approved the preliminary schedule for the 2015 preseason salmon management process as proposed with one adjustment. The March 31, 2015 California public hearing site was changed and will be held in Fort Bragg, California. Public hearings will also be held in Westport, Washington and Coos Bay, Oregon on March 30, 2015.

Lower Columbia Coho Harvest Matrix

The Council adopted Alternative 5g from the Lower Columbia River Natural Coho (LRC) Workgroup Report 2 for use in future fishery management decision making and to be forwarded to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with the recommendation it be used in their use in Endangered Species Act compliance determinations. The Council included the matrix (summarized below) and text box regarding seeding level options on page 3 of LRC Workgroup Report 2.

Parental Escapement (Percent of full seeding)	Marine Survival Index				
	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Normal	10%	15%	18%	23%	30%
Very Low	<10%	<15%	<18%	<23%	<30%

PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

2015 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and Regulations

The Council recommended modifications to the non-tribal allocations in the 2015 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A (CSP) in response to new information indicating a higher abundance of Pacific halibut and greater fishery participation in northern California than when the CSP was originally adopted. The California recreational fishery allocation will be increased from one to four percent of the non-tribal allocation by implementing a one percent reduction for the Washington recreational (35.6 percent), Oregon recreational (29.7 percent), and commercial (30.7 percent) sectors. Other changes include modifications to the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River Subarea, managing that subarea to one season, and increasing to the Southern Oregon subarea allocation.

Further, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife made note of their strong commitment to inseason management of the California recreational fishery during 2015 to stay within the CSP allocation, using the methodology described in writing at this Council meeting (<http://tinyurl.com/m5hwlyo>). A detailed description of all changes to the 2015 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and annual fishery regulations will be provided in a Council blog in early December.

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Report on the Atlantis Model Review

The Council endorsed the recommendations of the Review Panel and recommended that further consideration of the use of the California Current Atlantis Model be considered in conjunction with revisiting the fishery ecosystem plan initiatives.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

International Activities

The Council made the following recommendation to NMFS on implementing the Pacific bluefin tuna commercial catch limit of 600 metric tons (mt) for 2015-2016, as contained in Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Resolution C-14-06:

- A trip limit of 20 mt until 250 mt is caught.
- After 250 mt is caught, the trip limit is reduced to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.
- In the event of any landing exceeding the trip limit, the overage amount would be forfeited to the State of California.
- NMFS should seek non-punitive ways to discourage discarding fish at sea.

The Council also recommends NMFS develop the proper contingency regulations implementing the intent of Resolution C-14-06 regarding catch limits in 2016 depending on catch in 2015. The catch in any one year cannot exceed 425 mt and if catch exceeds 300 mt in 2015 then the catch limit for 2016 will be 200 mt or less. In general, catch in 2015 is deducted from the 600 mt two-year limit to determine the catch limit in 2016. These conditions will likely require additional measures to account for catches approaching 425 mt in either year and for the possibility that the catch limit in 2016 could be less than 250 mt, depending on catch in 2015.

The Council also requested that NMFS prepare two White Papers providing factual information about international fishery matters currently being discussed in an anecdotal context. One is to describe recreational fisheries for Pacific bluefin tuna in other countries; information about recreational catches of Pacific bluefin tuna in other countries have been primarily anecdotal, but suggests that there are recreational fisheries targeting Pacific bluefin tuna in other countries or there are bluefin tuna incidental catches while targeting other highly migratory species. The second White Paper is to deal with verifiable information about increases in fishing capacity and shortcomings in formal catch reporting from China; anecdotal information has been discussed about (1) significant increases in new Chinese fishing vessels being constructed over the past five years and many additional vessels under construction in shipyards either in or out of China, but to be fished with catch accountable to China

and (2) the lack of complete and timely reporting of catches that are rightfully attributed to China. The intent is that these White Papers would be completed in time for the advance Briefing Book for the March 2015 Council meeting, for discussion under the International Issues agenda item.

With respect to the upcoming Eleventh Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the Council advises the U.S. delegation to assure that any conservation measure adopted for South Pacific albacore that includes flag-based catch limits for fisheries in the high seas not include the U.S. troll fishery that operates in the South Pacific.

Finally, the Council recommended there should be adequate representation of the Council at the planned International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) workshop on a management strategy evaluation for North Pacific albacore, and that Council representative provide input into workshop design and logistics. This workshop, tentatively scheduled for April 2015, is intended to have participation from scientists, fishery managers, and stakeholders. As a management entity, the Council should be represented in U.S. participation at the workshop. The timing of the workshop should be coordinated to minimize critical conflict with the Council's March-April Council meeting process, and the workshop design should reflect perspectives expressed in the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) statements and Council discussion at the November 2014 Council meeting.

Bluefin Tuna Management Measures for 2015-2016 Fisheries

The Council chose as its final preferred alternative a two-fish Pacific bluefin tuna daily bag limit caught in recreational fisheries while fishing in U.S. waters off California and up to a six-fish possession limit for anglers operating out of California ports. As part of its preferred alternative, filleting of tunas at sea would be permitted based on procedures described in Agenda Item [I.3.b, Supplemental CDFW Report](#), and [Agenda Item I.3.b, Supplemental REVISED EC Report](#). The purpose of these procedures is to allow Pacific bluefin to be differentiated from other tuna species that may be filleted at sea for enforcement purposes.

Drift Gillnet Fishery Hard Caps and Other Adopted Priorities for 2015-2016 Fisheries

The Council discussed their general policy intent for the drift gillnet (DGN) fishery and made several decisions about (1) the pursuit of hard caps as a primary management measure in the DGN fishery and (2) other previously adopted HMS fishery priorities. The Council discussed a policy goal to end the DGN fishery and transition it to a swordfish target fishery that excludes DGN gear time at some point in the future, but did not adopt this as a policy goal. The discussion instead expressed a policy intent to pursue strong management measures designed to improve the target performance of the DGN fishery, while at the same time encouraging alternative gears that can provide for a viable commercial fishery with significantly better bycatch performance than the past DGN fishery. The Council also took the following actions:

1. Directed staff to write a letter to NMFS in response to the letter contained in [Agenda Item I.4.b, Supplemental NMFS Report](#), explaining that the Council's preliminary preferred alternatives for management of the California large mesh drift gillnet fishery via hard caps take into account the best available science and population status of marine mammals and sea turtles and are

intended to avoid potential conflicts with the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act, but are not intended to manage the populations of these animals through the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA).

2. Directed the HMSMT and staff to prepare a draft purpose and need statement for a Drift Gillnet Management and Monitoring Plan, including its goal and objectives, for the Council's consideration in March 2015. As part of this effort the Council staff should strive to complete a Fishery Monitoring Plan by June 2015, working with the HMSMT and other appropriate Council advisory bodies. The objective is to increase monitoring in the drift gillnet fishery, either through human observers or electronic technologies, to 100 percent.
3. Narrowed the ranges of alternatives described in [Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 1](#). Further detail on the range of alternatives to be analyzed will be forthcoming on the Council's website over the winter.
4. Clarified that the annual hard cap numbers for the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (see [Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 1](#)) are based on the Council's objectives to reduce bycatch.
5. Requested that, at a timely point prior to each fishing year, NMFS inform the Council of the level of observer coverage/electronic monitoring (EM) that NMFS would be able to fund. This would facilitate planning for non-government funding for the balance of the costs associated with observer coverage or electronic monitoring.
6. Prioritized HMS workload on hard caps and increased fishery monitoring for implementation in the 2015-2016 fishing season, over competing workload.
7. Scheduled further consideration of a Hawaii-type longline fishery outside the EEZ to begin at the June 2015 Council meeting.
8. Scheduled a range of options for transition of State DGN permits to a federal permit system under the MSA for the November 2015 Council meeting.

Salmon and Halibut Retention on Vessels Fishing for HMS Species

The Council tasked the Executive Director with sending a letter to NMFS stating the belief of the Council that current regulations that prohibit the retention of salmon and halibut on vessels fishing for HMS species is an inadvertent error. The letter will cite reasons as discussed in agenda item C.9 (see Agenda Item [C.9.a, Supplemental Attachment 7](#) and Agenda Item [C.9.b Supplemental HMSAS Report](#)), and request that a housekeeping rulemaking or other mechanism correct the regulations and provide a report on progress on this matter at the time of the advance Briefing Book for the March 2015 Council Meeting was also requested.

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

Widow Rockfish Reallocation and Divestiture Issues

The Council adopted for analysis the widow rockfish reallocation range of alternatives recommended by the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) plus: (1) a variation on Alternative 2 which would determine the split of the quota share (QS) allocation between whiting and non-whiting trips by applying the Amendment 21 rules for determining the split in allocation between whiting/non-whiting trips to the acceptable biological catch (ABC), rather than the annual catch limit (ACL); (2) a variation on Alternative 3 that would drop the three worst years out of the calculation for of the QS allocation to be based on 2003-2010 revenues. Regarding divestiture deadlines, the Council adopted the GAP

recommendations, reorganized for clarity. With respect to revoking forfeited quota shares, the Council adopted for analysis the GAP recommendation to provide QS owners with an opportunity to abandon QS to NMFS prior to the divestiture deadline, for redistribution among QS holders, rather than going through the forfeiture process after the divestiture deadline.

Initial Consideration of Blackgill Rockfish Reallocation

The Council decided to move forward with consideration to restructure the Slope Rockfish complex south of 40°10' N latitude by removing blackgill rockfish from the southern Slope Rockfish complex and reallocating both blackgill rockfish and the remaining species in the southern Slope Rockfish complex to trawl and non-trawl sectors. Analysis of alternatives will proceed over the winter with a goal of determining a final preferred alternative in advance of the November 2015 Council meeting, where management measures will be proposed. The schedule for this initiative includes the Council adopting a preliminary preferred alternative at the April 2015 Council meeting and making a final decision at the June 2015 Council meeting.

Groundfish Management Ongoing Rulemaking

The Council concurred with the general description of provisions proposed for the whiting clean-up rule, including defining trips with more than 50 percent whiting as Pacific whiting trips. The Council revised the overfishing limits, acceptable biological catches, and annual catch limits for English sole, yellowtail rockfish north of 40°10' N latitude, sharpchin rockfish, and rex sole, as well as the harvest specifications for the Slope Rockfish complexes and the Other Flatfish complex, as described in Agenda Item, [J.4.a, Attachment 2](#). The Council concurred with the NMFS interpretation of the whiting season start date as provided in Agenda Item [J.4.b, Supplemental NMFS Report 1](#).

Methodology Review Process Council Operating Procedure

The Council sanctioned moving forward with a process and schedule for groundfish methodology reviews as Council Operating Procedure (COP) 25. They recommended the draft COP 25 as shown in Agenda Item J.6.a, Attachment 1 be revised by incorporating the recommendations of the SSC, Groundfish Management Team (GMT), and GAP provided in supplemental reports under this agenda item. The Council has scheduled its final adoption of COP 25 for the April 2015 meeting.

Reconsideration of Open Access Registration under Amendment 22

The Council voted to rescind their recommendation to create a registry of open access groundfish fishermen originally adopted under Amendment 22. The Council believes the costs of creating a registry outweigh the benefits and the rescission would free up resources to advance other higher priority initiatives.

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The Council considered the higher than expected catches of black rockfish and California scorpionfish in the California recreational fishery in 2014 and recommended inseason adjustments for 2015. Specifically, a five fish black rockfish sub-bag limit within the ten fish rockfish, cabezon and greenling bag limit would be implemented in 2015. Additionally, retention of California scorpionfish in the California recreational fisheries would be prohibited from September through December 2015.

In response to the situation surrounding the emergency Council meeting of October 17, 2014, the Council staff was tasked with drafting regulations for the Council to consider at the April 2015 Council meeting to provide the NMFS Regional Administrator the authority and discretion to take the kind of automatic actions that would have eliminated the need for this emergency Council meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Recreational Fisheries Policy Update

The Council directed staff to submit a letter to NMFS with recommendations for changes and additions to the Public Comment Draft of the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy. The letter will present the Council's general agreement with most of what the Council heard from seven advisory body statements and public testimony, with a focus on when allocation reviews should be mandated for the purposes of enhancing recreational fishing. The Council also recommended adding policy emphasis for support and protection of United States recreational fishing opportunities and benefits in bilateral and international relations with neighboring countries, citing the current U.S. HMS fishery that fishes in conjunction with Mexican fishery allowances as one example.

National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region Strategic Plan

The Council directed staff to submit a letter to NMFS with recommendations for changes and additions to the Working Draft of the NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region Strategic Plan: 2016-2020, including incorporating comments submitted by the SSC, Salmon Advisory Subpanel, Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel, HMSAS, HMSMT, GAP, and GMT. The Council has scheduled another review of the Strategic Plan for the March or April 2015 Council Meeting.

Fiscal Matters

The Council adopted a provisional operating budget of \$4,741,136 for calendar year 2015 and directed staff to pursue special project funding for electronic monitoring and technology, groundfish essential fish habitat Amendment 26, and Fishery Ecosystem Plan initiatives, in priority order. Absent special project funding, Council efforts on these matters would be suspended after their currently funded 2015 activities, which are through the June, April, and March Council meetings, respectively. The Council also tasked the Council staff with pursuing additional funding for HMS activities.

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

The Council made the following appointments to advisory bodies:

- Dr. Kevin Piner to fill the vacant Southwest Fisheries Science Center seat on the Scientific and Statistical Committee.
- Dr. John Field to the vacant at-large seat on the Scientific and Statistical Committee.
- Mr. Brett Kormos to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife seat on the Salmon Technical Team.
- Ms. Elizabeth Hellmers to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife seat on the Highly Migratory Species Management Team.
- Mr. Peter Hassemer to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game seat on the Habitat Committee.

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for March 2015 in Vancouver, Washington. Tentative proposed agendas for both the March and April Council meetings can be found on the Council website. A draft detailed March meeting agenda is expected to be available in February 2014.

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