



THE LINE.

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The Line is a summary of West Coast fisheries news published four or five times per year. This issue reports on decisions made at the March and April 2016 Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings. The Council recommends commercial & recreational fishery management measures for Federal waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon & California. The Council has five public meetings a year. All Council recommendations are subject to approval by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). To sign up for other notices, go to tinyurl.com/3s5edce.

GROUNDFISH.

For more details on all topics, see <http://tinyurl.com/PFMC-spring>. **Inseason changes:** Landing limits for the limited-entry sablefish daily trip limit fishery north of 36° N. latitude are 1,125 pounds per week and 3,375 pounds per bimonthly period. Open access fixed-gear sablefish trip limits north of 36° latitude were reduced to 300 lbs. daily, or one landing per week up to 850 lbs., not to exceed 1,700 lbs. per two months. Both adjustments go into effect on July 1. • **2017-2018 fisheries:** In April, the Council adopted final preferred 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish stocks and stock complexes. Comments are welcomed; see details at <http://tinyurl.com/hkul245>. • **Midwater sport fishery:** A midwater long-leader recreational fishery for rockfish in Oregon is moving forward. • **Vessel monitoring:** The Council finalized its plan to remotely track commercial fishing vessels. Also, electronic monitoring for the groundfish individual fishing quota fixed-gear fishery and whiting midwater trawl fishery is moving forward. As approved by the Council, the program will allow vessel owners to use electronic monitoring, rather than a human observer, to monitor discard in the fishery. The Council also plans to explore electronic technology solutions, such as fish recognition software, to monitor landings in the shorebased individual fishing quota program. • **Pacific whiting:** The total allowable catch of Pacific whiting under the U.S.-Canada Whiting Treaty agreement has been set at 367,553 metric tons for the U.S., slightly more than 2015's total allowable catch of 325,072 mt. • **Trawl regulations:** The Council removed some of the trawl gear regulations that have become obsolete because of the trawl catch share program. • **Jig gear:** A test fishery for commercial jig gear, used to target yellowtail rockfish, may be extended for two years. The gear is being tested in a California rockfish conservation area. The Council will make a decision in June. • **Essential fish habitat:** The Council is reviewing proposed changes to the essential fish habitat designations for groundfish, and its Rockfish Conservation Areas. This is an extremely complex process. The Council will discuss further in September or November, with a final decision in 2017.

SALMON.

Ocean salmon seasons in 2016 will provide recreational and commercial opportunities coastwide. Columbia River fall Chinook returns look good, and Columbia River coho are moderate. Coastal Washington and Puget Sound coho abundance is much less than in recent years. Sacramento River fall Chinook are at about half the level of last year, and Klamath fall Chinook are much lower than last year. For season details, see

<http://tinyurl.com/PFMC-spring>, page 2.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES.

Deep-set buoy gear. The Council is considering authorizing a deep-set buoy gear fishery; a test fishery is already taking place and shows promise as an alternative way to catch swordfish with less bycatch. The Council may adopt a range of alternatives for this fishery in September. • **U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty:** Fishing under the treaty will expire at the end of the 2016 fishing season, which means that albacore fishing by either country in the other country's waters would stop unless a new agreement is negotiated. The Council will discuss this in November.

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT.

A sardine stock assessment shows the biomass at 106,137 metric tons. Because the stock size is below the cut-off threshold, there will again be no directed non-Treaty fishery for the 2016-2017 sardine season.

HALIBUT.

For the salmon troll fishery, halibut limits are as follows: From May 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016 and April 1-30, 2017, license holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per each three Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 20 halibut landed per trip. Limits may be modified by inseason action. For the fixed gear primary fishery north of Point Chehalis, limits are two fish plus 110 pounds of halibut per 1,000 pounds dressed weight of sablefish. Retention of Pacific halibut in the limited entry fixed gear sablefish primary fishery may be closed if the halibut quota for the fishery is met. Closures will also be announced on the National Marine Fisheries Service halibut hotline at 1-800-662-9825 (press 7, then 2). For details, see <http://tinyurl.com/PFMC-spring>, page 4.

HABITAT.

The Council sent a letter on protection of Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon to the California State Water Resources Control Board and the Bureau of Reclamation. See <http://tinyurl.com/ha8lpnr>.

OTHER BUSINESS.

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for June 23-28, 2016 in Tacoma, WA. The meeting is open to the public, and the comment deadline is May 26. For more information, see <http://tinyurl.com/746lten>.