

FINAL ACTION ON SARDINE ASSESSMENT, SPECIFICATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

At this meeting, the Council will consider the 2015 Pacific sardine stock assessment, and will adopt harvest specifications and management measures for the 2015-16 Pacific sardine fishing season. The 2015 assessment (Agenda Item G.1.a, Stock Assessment Report) is an update assessment, based on the previous year's full assessment. Update assessments carry forward the same fundamental structure of the last full assessment, including the same population dynamics model, data sources, and statistical platform. Although minor changes can be allowed, update assessments are generally restricted to the addition of new data that have become available since the last full assessment.

At this Council meeting, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will review the SSC's Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Subcommittee report and the update assessment, and make an overfishing limit (OFL) and a corresponding acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendation to the Council. Because the stock assessment presents two alternative biomass estimates, the SSC will endorse a single estimate for Council consideration. The Council will consider a range of ABC levels associated with various P* alternatives, and will establish harvest specifications and management measures. The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team and the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel will also provide recommendations to the Council on the 2015-16 sardine season.

The Quinault Indian Nation provided notice of their intent to participate in the upcoming sardine fishery, with an anticipated allocation need of 1,000 metric tons (mt) (Agenda Item G.1.b, Tribal Report).

The Pacific sardine Harvest Control Rule includes a CUTOFF threshold of 150,000 mt, and both biomass estimates presented in the stock assessment are below this value. In low biomass conditions when the stock is below the CUTOFF but above the overfished threshold, the FMP allows for the establishment of incidental harvest allowances and the continuation of the live bait fishery. The minimum stock size threshold defines the overfished level for Pacific sardine, and is 50,000 mt, meaning that based on either of the two biomass estimates, the stock is not overfished. The CPS Fishery Management Plan provides guidance on incidental catch allowances in such situations: *"Incidental catch allowances are meant to accommodate catches that are difficult to avoid during normal fishing directed at other species. Therefore, incidental catch allowances should be set at levels that approximate incidental catch rates during normal fishing activities and do not result in landings in excess of an ACL or ABC."*

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt the Pacific Sardine Assessment and Pacific sardine OFL.**
- 2. Select P*, ABC, ACL, and, if appropriate, ACT Specifications and Management Measures, Including Consideration of a Quinault Tribal Allocation.**
- 3. Adopt Incidental Catch Allowance.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.1.a, Stock Assessment Report Executive Summary: *Assessment of the Pacific Sardine Resource in 2015 for U.S.A Management in 2015-16.*
2. Agenda Item G.1.a, Stock Assessment Report (**ELECTRONIC ONLY**): *Assessment of the Pacific Sardine Resource in 2015 for U.S.A Management in 2015-16.*
3. Agenda Item G.1.b, Tribal Report: Letter from Ed Johnstone, Quinault Fisheries Policy Spokesperson, regarding the Quinault Indian Nation's intent to establish a tribal allocation and to enter the 2015-16 Pacific sardine fishery.
4. Agenda Item G.1.c, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

G.1 Final Action on Sardine Assessment, Specifications, and Management Measures

- a. Stock Assessment Report
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Pacific Sardine Assessment and Final Harvest Specifications and Management Measures for the 2015-2016 Sardine Fishery

Kerry Griffin
Kevin Hill

PFMC
04/01/15