

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON ARTISANAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT ISSUE SCOPING

At its April 2016 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) requested the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) explore management options to account for a small artisanal sardine fishery. The CPSMT reported that some very small-scale fishing operations for Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) have been negatively affected by the closure of the directed sardine fishery (Agenda Item H.1.b, Supplemental CPSMT Report, April 2016). Such operations generally are unable to meet the current incidental landing exemption, even though their landings are very small and would not pose a conservation concern, as landings would be accounted for under existing harvest limits. For example, landings by a beach seine operation may often be over 50 percent sardine, yet only total a few hundred pounds. Such landings do not meet the incidental landing allowances when the directed fishery is closed.

Currently, the CPS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) provides criteria for establishing incidental catch allowances and live bait fishing allowances for instances when a particular stock is overfished or not overfished (Chapter 5). Also for Pacific sardine, incidental landing allowances are set when the stock is not overfished but the biomass is below the CUTOFF and the directed fishery is closed. Management measures for incidental landing allowances are typically expressed as allowable percentages of that species in a landing of the dominant species catch. When a directed CPS fishery is closed, these small allowances have allowed for the continued prosecution of the other open CPS fisheries, as well as the operation of the live bait fishery. However, some other very small-scale fisheries have been precluded from fishing and/or harvesting even *de minimis* amounts because they are not caught incidental to another CPS species (i.e., within allowances) or the fish are not sold as live bait. Currently under a closed sardine fishery, there exist such small-scale fisheries which sell sardine as specialty dead bait to recreational fisheries or for human consumption to local restaurants and the public.

The CPSMT identified the following artisanal fishery considerations related to sardines, but notes similar effects may arise for other CPS and CPS fisheries.

Scope

The scope of artisanal fisheries issues for Council consideration could address only the issues related to sardines or broaden consideration to cover other CPS. At this initial stage, the CPSMT is taking a broad approach. Therefore, initial scoping is based on addressing all managed CPS finfish: Pacific sardine, Pacific mackerel, jack mackerel, and both subpopulations of northern anchovy. Market squid are not managed in a similar manner to finfish species, and the CPSMT proposes to exclude them from consideration. Also, the CPSMT initially considers the scope to include all legal CPS gears: purse seine, lampara, beach seine, hook and line, set longline and brail.

Proposed Intent

The CPSMT considered the importance of stock conservation, the effects of directed fishery closures on artisanal fisheries, and potential effects on other fisheries in developing the proposed description of intent for this action.

- Under existing harvest limits and other measures intended to prevent overfishing, allow *de minimis* harvests of a CPS when they would otherwise be precluded.
- Provide opportunity for artisanal fishery operations to continue harvesting in a manner similar to their fishing activities when directed fishing is allowed, for the purpose of maintaining their viability while minimizing the potential impacts to existing CPS fisheries.

Potential Regulatory Pathways

An FMP amendment will be required to allow *de minimis* small-scale harvest when the directed fishery is closed. The CPSMT will continue exploring at least two pathways. The first pathway would define a *de minimis* harvest level in the FMP to specify amounts of a species that are exempt from typical CPS harvest specifications. This would most likely be expressed in terms of trip limits or a daily harvest limit. Landings would be recorded, tracked, and reported in the Stock Assessment Fishery Evaluation document. However, there would not be a mechanism to close the artisanal fishery during the year.

The second pathway would establish a mechanism for establishing harvest limits (e.g., daily or trip) for a new category of directed fishing, i.e., these artisanal fisheries. Under this pathway, the Council could either a) establish permanent limits that do not require further consideration during the management specifications process for CPS, or b) set limits whenever management specifications are adopted.

For all pathways, landing amounts (from fish receiving tickets) would still be applied against the applicable annual catch limit (ACL), and therefore do not pose additional conservation risk for the CPS.

Implementation

As mentioned above, incidental landing allowances for CPS fisheries are currently expressed as percentages of the total landing. The CPSMT is exploring landing limits for artisanal fisheries, expressed in terms of weight (metric tons) for a CPS rather than percentages. Based on preliminary analyses of landings information, artisanal fisheries which currently cannot effectively participate in CPS fisheries under incidental allowances expressed as percentages can more fully participate if landing amounts for a CPS are specified by weight, either as a *de minimis* harvest level or as a trip limit.

In June 2016 (Agenda Item F.6.a, Supplemental CPSMT Report), the CPSMT proposed a schedule for Council consideration of the artisanal fishery issue to enable artisanal fisheries to participate in the 2017-18 sardine fishery, should the Council approve accommodation of artisanal fisheries for CPS. To account for Council consideration and regulatory actions, the CPSMT proposed that final Council action occur no later than March 2017. In support of this schedule, the CPSMT intends to provide a supplemental report for the September Council meeting that provides more information on scoping issues and options, and poses questions for Council guidance to aid in development of a range of alternatives.