

PACIFIC WHITING HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2010

The Pacific whiting fishery management process is unlike that for other Federally-managed west coast groundfish for 2010 fisheries, for which catch specifications and management measures were adopted by the Council at the June 2008 Council meeting for the two-year period 2009-2010. For example, specifications are done annually at the March Council meetings and stock assessments are done immediately prior to the Council decision.

The Council deferred a decision on setting harvest specifications and management measures for the 2010 Pacific whiting fisheries pending the development and review of a new stock assessment to occur during February 2010. Two new Pacific whiting assessments were prepared this winter (Agenda Item E.3.a, Attachments 1 and 2) and reviewed by a joint U.S.-Canadian assessment review panel during February 2010 (Agenda Item E.3.a, Attachment 3). The Executive Summary of these assessments are included in the briefing book and the assessments in their entirety are found in the CD copy of meeting materials, along with other materials that will be reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The Council should consider the advice of the assessment review panel, the SSC, and other advisors before adopting an assessment for use in management decision-making. The assessment, once approved, will be used to set 2010 Pacific whiting harvest specifications and management measures.

Further, beginning in 2004, this transboundary stock was managed jointly with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, in the spirit of a new process described in a treaty that has been signed and ratified, but awaits final rulemaking. The primary tenets of the treaty include a joint U.S.-Canada annual assessment and management process (which will presumably be implemented next year), a research commitment, and a harvest sharing agreement providing 73.88 percent of the coastwide optimum yield (OY) for U.S. fisheries and 26.12 percent for Canadian fisheries.

The Council is tasked with setting an acceptable biological catch (ABC) and OY for Pacific whiting that will be used to manage 2010 fisheries. (Management measures to properly prosecute the fishery will be decided at this meeting under the Inseason Adjustments Agenda Item E.5 when bycatch balance with other fisheries is considered). Considerations for deciding 2010 Pacific whiting harvest specifications include the stock's current and projected status with respect to the overfished threshold and the international agreement with Canada. Unless there is a change in the research, non-whiting fishery bycatch, and tribal set-asides, once the OY is set, the apportionment within the non-tribal fisheries is set automatically via the existing intersector allocation (i.e., 42 percent for the shoreside whiting sector, 24 percent for the at-sea mothership whiting sector, and 34 percent for the at-sea catcher-processor whiting sector).

The Council originally set aside 50,000 mt of whiting for 2009 and 2010 tribal whiting fisheries at the June 2008 Council meeting, with 42,000 mt set aside for the Makah Tribe and 8,000 mt set aside for the Quileute Indian Tribe. Last year the Makah Tribe agreed to reduce their 2009 fishery set-aside from 42,000 mt to 17.5 percent of the U.S. OY (23,789 mt). An additional 8,000 mt was set aside for the Quileute Tribe to accommodate their plans to prosecute a whiting fishery in 2009, which ultimately did not occur. The Council should consider tribal requests before adopting a set-aside of Pacific whiting yield to accommodate 2010 tribal whiting fisheries.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt a 2010 Pacific whiting stock assessment.**
- 2. Adopt a 2010 ABC and OY for Pacific whiting.**
- 3. Adopt a Pacific whiting set-aside to accommodate 2010 tribal whiting fisheries.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.3.a, Attachment 1: Executive Summary of Assessment and Management advice for Pacific hake in U.S. and Canadian waters in 2010.
2. Agenda Item E.3.a, Attachment 2: Executive Summary of Stock Assessment of Pacific Hake, *Merluccius productus*, (a.k.a. Whiting) in U.S. and Canadian Waters in 2010.
3. Agenda Item E.3.a, Attachment 3: Pacific Whiting – The Joint U.S.-Canada STAR Panel Report.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview John DeVore
- b. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Final 2010 Stock Assessment, Allowable Biological Catch, and Optimum Yield (Management Measures will be adopted under Agenda Item E.5)

PFMC
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