

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON PACIFIC MACKEREL MANAGEMENT FOR 2010-2011

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) met jointly with the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) to discuss Pacific mackerel management measures and the harvest guideline (HG) for the 2010-2011 season. Dr. Kevin Hill presented CPSMT analysis of scientific uncertainty and application of an uncertainty buffer relative to Pacific Mackerel. The CPSAS thanks and commends Dr. Hill, Dr. Crone and the Pacific Mackerel Assessment Team for their dedication and hard work in developing the analysis.

CPSAS members voiced concern with a suggestion to simply adopt the existing management measures for another year. Pacific mackerel are subject to rapid increase in biomass and landings, as was documented in the 2000-2001 season, which led to premature closure of the mackerel fishery. California fishermen have reported a recent increase in mackerel sightings. A spike in mackerel abundance could trigger closure of other fisheries such as market squid, under current management measures. Currently there are only 2,000 mt available for incidental take in other fisheries.

Based on the 2009-10 assessment, the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the 2010-2011 season remains 55,408 metric tons (mt). The CPSAS acknowledges the continuing need to set a HG below the ABC in light of scientific uncertainty.

The Council should consider the following in adopting management measures for 2010-2011:

- The potential for a rapid increase in catches as occurred in 2000-01 (see Table 11-7 of the Draft CPS Stock Assessment Fishery Evaluation document);
- The potential for negative impacts to other fisheries if there is a sharp increase in mackerel landings;
- The likelihood that aerial surveys conducted in Southern California in summer 2010 for sardine will identify Pacific mackerel and potentially lead to an increase in catch;
- Both the CPSMT and CPSAS recommended HGs in the range of 30,000 mt in 2009, which still left a substantial buffer to account for uncertainty.

The CPSAS recommends that the Council retain the 8,000 mt directed fishery HG established for 2009-2010. However, for the above reasons, we recommend increasing the incidental set-aside to 8,000 mt, for a total HG of 16,000 mt. This will protect other fisheries, and leave a substantial buffer to account for uncertainty.

The CPSAS further recommends the following in the event the directed fishery closes:

- A 45 percent incidental catch is allowed when Pacific mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species; and
- Up to 1 mt of Pacific mackerel could be landed without landing any other CPS.

Presently, the commercial passenger fishing vessel index is the sole index remaining in the Stock Synthesis Model. More research is sorely needed to produce accurate Pacific mackerel stock assessments in the future. The CPSAS recommends exploring alternative indices that might inform the assessment. One potential source of data in the future could include using the Aerial Survey for both sardine and mackerel.

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Five-Year Review

The CPSAS heard a report on the CPS EFH five-year review, and recommends that the CPSMT continue this review, coordinating with the CPSAS and Habitat Committee. The CPSAS further recommends having the opportunity to review a draft document prior to final Council action at the November Council meeting.

PFMC

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