

FISHERIES IN 2015-2016 AND BEYOND: HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS,  
MANAGEMENT MEASURES, AND AMENDMENT 24

The process to adopt the 2015-2016 harvest specifications and management measures began in June 2013 and culminates at this meeting with final action scheduled under Agenda Item F.7. Final action is also scheduled under this agenda item for Amendment 24, which would amend the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to include default harvest control rules that would be used in future bienniums, unless modified by the Council, to establish harvest specifications; and to designate some FMP species as ecosystem component (EC) species. Amendment 24, coupled with the long-term impact analysis (referred to as the Tier analysis), is designed to streamline the analytical process, substantially reduce future workload, and increase the probability that future harvest specifications are implemented January 1. Detailed descriptions of anticipated Council actions are described in Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 1.

At its April 2014 meeting, the Council adopted final overfishing limits (OFLs) as recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee, acceptable biological catches (ABCs) that incorporate scientific uncertainty buffers, and annual catch limits (ACLs) for stocks and stock complexes (Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 2). Relative to the slope rockfish complexes, the Council's preliminary preferred decision was to maintain the status quo complex structures. Further, the Council recommended a coastwide sorting requirement for rougheye and blackspotted rockfish. The Council also took final action to designate the following species as EC species: finescale codling (aka Pacific flatnose), soupfin shark, spotted ratfish, all endemic skates except longnose skate, and all endemic grenadiers. Lastly, the Council selected preliminary preferred fishery structures and narrowed the list of new management measures under consideration for implementation in 2015 (see Attachment 1, page 4).

Council Action, below, lists seven decisions that must be made under Agenda Item F.7. The substance of each of these decisions is briefly described below.

- Decisions 1 & 2: Establish a new target year to rebuild cowcod and adopt revised 2016 OFL and ABC values for cowcod. Table 2 in Attachment 2 contains the estimated time to rebuild cowcod under a range of ACLs. The projected 2016 cowcod OFL and ABC under the Council's preferred alternative differs slightly from those specifications adopted in April (the 2016 OFL changed from 66 mt to 68 mt and the 2016 ABC under a P\* of 0.45 changed from 59 mt to 62 mt).
- Decision 3: Confirm EC species designations and provide guidance on the associated FMP language (Attachment 8).
- Decision 4: Select the final preferred alternative for managing the slope rockfish complexes (Attachment 4).
- Decisions 5 & 6: Confirm final 2015-2016 harvest specifications for all groundfish stocks and stock complexes. Adopt final preferred fishery structures, including two-year allocations for overfished species and harvest guidelines for nearshore rockfish, and determine which new management measures should be implemented in regulation starting in 2015 (Attachments 1 and 3-6).

- Decision 7: Adopt a preferred alternative for Amendment 24 to the FMP, which modifies the procedures described in the FMP so that, in the absence of Council action, harvest specification values based on default harvest control rules for one or more stocks or stock complexes may be published in Federal regulations. During any biennial decision-making process the Council may depart from these default values by deciding to modify the harvest control rule for one or more management units. After deciding a final preferred alternative for Amendment 24, the Council should provide guidance on the necessary FMP language (Attachment 8).

Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 3 includes the Executive Summary from the preliminary draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which provides an overview of the proposed action alternatives and environmental impacts. Further, the attachment summarizes the Council's preliminary preferred fishery structures and management measures for the 2015-2016 fisheries. Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachments 4 and 7 contain the preliminary DEIS and Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation document, respectively, which are available electronically only.

The process and schedule for adopting the 2015-2016 and beyond harvest specifications and management measures relies on earlier decision-making and the publication of a DEIS prior to final Council action at this meeting. It is important to note there is less scope for the Council to make substantial changes when crafting the final preferred alternative because of this altered schedule made necessary by the National Environmental Policy Act requirements and a January 1, 2015 implementation target. The final preferred alternative can only vary slightly from any one of the alternatives evaluated in the DEIS so that forecasted impacts fall within the range of those disclosed in the DEIS. If the final preferred alternative does not meet those criteria, it is likely that the DEIS would have to be revised to disclose any substantially different impacts, republished for public review, and scheduled for final decision-making at a future Council meeting. This would probably preclude the objective of implementing new regulations on January 1, 2015 (the start of the next management period).

### **Council Action:**

- 1. Adopt a  $T_{TARGET}$  for the cowcod rebuilding plan;**
- 2. Adopt revised values for the 2016 cowcod OFL and ABC;**
- 3. Confirm EC species designations and provide guidance on the associated FMP language;**
- 4. Adopt a final preferred alternative for slope rockfish stock complexes;**
- 5. Confirm final 2015-2016 harvest specifications for all groundfish stocks and stock complexes;**
- 6. Adopt final 2015-2016 season structures and management measures, including new management measures; and**
- 7. Adopt a final preferred Amendment 24 alternative and provide guidance on the associated FMP language.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 1: Action Item Checklist.
2. Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 2: Preferred 2015 and 2016 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish Stocks and Stock Complexes.
3. Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 3: Executive Summary and Description of the Preferred Season Structures and Management Measures, An Excerpt from the Preliminary DEIS.
4. Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 4: Preliminary Draft of, “Groundfish Harvest Specifications and Management Measures and Amendment 24: Draft Environmental Impact Statement” **(electronic only)**.
5. Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 5: Appendix B to Proposed Harvest Specifications and Management Measures for the 2015-2016 Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery and Amendment 24 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement **(electronic only)**.
6. Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 6: Excerpted Portions of Appendix B of the Preliminary Draft 2015-2016 Groundfish Harvest Specifications and Management Measures Environmental Impact Statement Relevant to the Preferred Alternative.
7. Agenda Item F.4.a, Attachment 7: Preliminary Draft of the 2014 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Document **(electronic only)**.
8. Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 8: Proposed Groundfish FMP Amendment Language for Default Harvest Control Rules and for Designation of Ecosystem Component Species under Amendment 24.
9. Agenda Item F.7.c, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview Kelly Ames and Kit Dahl
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Confirm Final 2015-2016 Harvest Specifications; Adopt Final Management Measures; Adopt Final Preferred Alternatives for Amendment 24 Default Harvest Control Rules

PFMC  
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