

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON PACIFIC MACKEREL
HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2014-2015

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS), in joint session with the CPS Management Team (CPSMT), heard a presentation by Dr. Kevin Hill, reviewing the catch-only biomass projection estimate for Pacific mackerel for management in the 2014-15 fishing year (Agenda Item G.2.b. NMFS Report). Dr. Hill presented the default projection based on the 2011 Pacific mackerel assessment model XA, and several sensitivity runs requested by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to reflect uncertainty in recruitment projections. The assessment also included projected harvest control rule scenarios for Pacific mackerel for the 2014-15 fishing year, based on the default model projection and three alternative model scenarios.

In discussion it was noted that the SSC did not endorse the default projection, which would result in a 60,057 mt harvest guideline (HG). Instead, the SSC recommended a model scenario based on average recruitment in 2008-2010, which reduces the HG to 29,170 mt. This reflects more than a 50 percent reduction and is also a 22,830 mt decrease from the 2013-2014 HG.

The CPSAS is very concerned that this catch-only projection, which only includes data through 2010, substantially decreases harvest opportunity at a time when Pacific mackerel are increasing in the fishery. As we commented last year, the Pacific mackerel resource is subject to periodic large increases in biomass and landings, as occurred in 2000-2001. Ocean conditions are changing and are now favorable for mackerel. It is particularly important to maintain the option to harvest Pacific mackerel when the harvest opportunity for other CPS fisheries may be on the decline. The industry is now facing a difficult decision on how much to allocate for directed fishing and how much to set aside for incidental catches in other fisheries. Incidental catch of Pacific mackerel is occurring in virtually all CPS catches.

This troublesome situation highlights the need for further flexibility in the Terms of Reference for stock assessments to address recruitment. This should reflect best scientific practices to include new data during projection and update assessments. Further, the Council should consider upgrading catch-only projections to a more robust form of assessment when increased catches warrant it.

Harvest and Management Specifications

(1) The CPSAS supports the CPSMT recommendations of an acceptable biological catch (ABC) and annual catch limit (ACL) equal to 30,138 mt (based on a CPSMT-recommended P^* of 0.45), and HG set equal to 29,170 mt. The CPSAS recommends an incidental set-aside of 5,000 mt (17 percent) resulting in an annual catch target (ACT) of 24,170 mt.

(2) Should the directed fishery reach the ACT (24,170 mt) and shift to an incidental catch-only fishery, the CPSAS recommends a 45 percent incidental landing allowance of mackerel in other CPS fisheries. In addition, 1 mt of Pacific mackerel may be landed without any other CPS.

(3) The CPSAS recommends an in-season review of the 2014-2015 Pacific mackerel fishery at the March 2015 Council meeting, if needed, to consider releasing a portion of the incidental set-aside to the directed fishery.

Table 1. Pacific Mackerel Harvest Formulas	MT
Biomass	157,106
$OFL = \text{Biomass} * F_{msy} * \text{Distribution}$	32,992
$ABC_{0.45} = \text{Biomass} * \text{Buffer}_{0.45} * F_{msy} * \text{Distribution}$	30,138
ACL	30,138
$HG = (\text{Biomass} - \text{Cutoff}) * \text{Fraction} * \text{Distribution}$	29,170
$ACT = (HG - \text{incidental set aside})$	24,170
Incidental set-aside	5,000

PFMC
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