

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON SARDINE  
ASSESSMENT, SPECIFICATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) and Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) received a joint briefing from Dr. Kevin Hill. The CPSAS also reviewed the Pacific Sardine Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel Report and Northwest Aerial Survey Report (Agenda Items H.1.a), and the Sardine Stock Assessment Report for USA management in 2014-15 (Agenda Item H.1.b).

The CPSAS thanks the STAR Panel and Stock Assessment Team for their efforts to improve management of the U.S. sardine fishery. The CPSAS appreciates the Council's consideration of the following points in deliberating management measures for the 2014-2015 sardine fishery:

1. Although the current stock assessment reflects a declining trend, the absolute scale of the population is still in question, as it was in 2011.
2. Industry remains concerned about the ability of the current acoustic trawl method (ATM) surveys to measure the full extent of the biomass. The ATM surveys are now driving the assessment model. We are also disappointed that industry-sponsored aerial surveys have been removed. We sincerely hope that going forward we can develop a truly collaborative research program for the CPS complex.
3. Sardine recruitment is influenced by environmental conditions. La Niña conditions in 2000-2002 caused a dip in the sardine population similar to the last three years, but El Niño restored the biomass to 1.37 million mt in 2006. Another El Niño is likely on the way this fall.
4. Recent analysis shows that the Amendment 8 Harvest Control Rule (HCR) was ultra-conservative, and the Amendment 13 HCR is even more conservative, with the overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rules added as additional layers of precaution.
5. Based on the CPS Fishery Management Plan, the current HCR prescribes a 15 percent FRACTION, and results in a HG of 28,646 mt. This HG is considerably lower than the OFL of 39,210 mt and Category 1 ABC of 35,792 mt at  $P^* .40$ , and is even lower than an ABC at a  $P^*$  of 0.20.
6. Until the HG harvest FRACTION changes are implemented, it would be premature to apply a different HCR FRACTION for setting harvest.
7. The CPSAS appreciates efforts to better address catches of northern and southern substocks in the stock assessment. We concur with recommendations of the STAR Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee that more research is needed. Absent additional research, we expect that all sardines landed in U.S. waters will be managed status quo under the CPS FMP.
8. Please consider that achieving Optimum Yield requires balancing fishery opportunity, economic stability, and ecosystem needs. Each 1,000 mt reduction in harvest equates to a loss of \$800,000 in direct economic activity. The sardine HCR is a highly precautionary management policy. The industry wants to maintain a sustainable resource.

## Management Measures

(1) The CPSAS recommends the following management measures for the July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015 sardine fishery, based on the harvest guideline of 28,646 metric tons (mt) as outlined in the Stock Assessment Report (Agenda Item H.1.b).

HG = 28,646 mt Tribal Allocation = 4,000 mt Adjusted HG = 24,646 mt				
	Jul 1- Sep 14	Sep 15 – Dec 31	Jan 1- Jun 30	Total
Seasonal Allocation (mt)	9,858 (40%)	6,162 (25%)	8,626 (35%)	24,646
Incidental Set-Aside (mt)	500	500	500	1,500
Adjusted (Directed) Allocation (mt)	9,358	5,662	8,126	23,146

(2) After the closure of the directed sardine fishery in any period, the incidental landing allowance in other CPS fisheries should be 45 percent Pacific sardine by weight, to account for the possibility of mixed-fish catches. We recommend only 500 mt incidental set-aside per period, which is half of prior incidental set-asides. Any unused allocation in each of the first two periods will be rolled into the next period's directed fishery. Any incidental set aside not used in the third period will be foregone.

The CPSAS is considering options for 2015-2016 and beyond to shift a portion of the incidental set-aside from future periods.

PFMC  
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