

## COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT: SARDINE FISHERY START DATE AND MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE

At the April 2013 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) and Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) presented a joint report to the Council that proposed July 1 as an alternative Pacific sardine fishery start date, to address resource assessment scheduling constraints that exist as a result of the current fishery year start of January 1. Following discussion at the April meeting, the CPSMT, CPSAS, and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended the change. The Council supported the concept and tasked the CPSMT with presenting an implementation plan for a possible final decision in June. The start date proposal and implementation plan was further reviewed and developed at a May 20-23, 2013 joint meeting of the CPSMT and the SSC Coastal Pelagic Species Subcommittee (SSC-CPSS) meeting, which included representatives from the CPSAS.

The current Pacific sardine fishing year begins January 1 with the annual harvest guideline divided by fixed percentages to three periods: January 1 – June 30, July – September 15 and September 16 –December 31. This regime was adopted under Amendment 11 to address long-term allocation of Pacific sardine in 2006. Amendment 11 changed the prevailing allocation scheme from a geographical construct to a three-period fishing year, open coastwide but with three different fishing openers. The CPSMT has evaluated the proposed start date change and found it consistent with objectives and analyses conducted in Amendment 11 to the CPS Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Among its objectives, Amendment 11 intended to allow for un-harvested quota to be transferred to the subsequent fishing period. Transfer of un-harvested allocation allows fish allocated but not harvested in the first and second periods to be added to the subsequent period's allocation. The CPSMT notes that the dynamics relative to allocation period rollovers may change with a July 1 start date. Under the proposed start date of July 1, rollovers may occur between Periods 1 and 2 (September 14 to September 15) and between Periods 2 to 3 (December 31 to January 1), but after the third period, any unharvested allocation as of June 30 would not be rolled into the subsequent fishing year. Since implementation of Amendment 11 in 2006, allocation rollovers occurred four times from the first to the second period. The CPSMT recognizes that there may be modest changes in fishing patterns in order to fully utilize the harvest guideline rather than let it expire. However, market and weather conditions, which are not predictable, will also play a significant factor in fishing behavior. CPSAS representatives at the May 2013 meeting acknowledged this possibility and noted that this had been discussed and was supported among industry members.

Should the Council adopt the date change in start date, technical and regulatory changes will be necessary to accomplish full implementation by July 1, 2014. This includes a regulatory amendment (regulations issued by NMFS) and approval of a revised Council Operating Procedure (COP) 9, which guides annual management cycles for CPS and other Council-managed species. The CPSMT reiterates from the April supplemental team report (Agenda I.2.b) the following steps to address interim management for January through June 2014 and to develop management measures for July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015:

- Forego a full-scale update review by the SSC-CPSS this fall.
- Use the current assessment model to produce a simple catch-only projection update that would provide the basis for the first allocation period of 2014 (January 1 to June 30). The STAT would provide the update in an executive summary format.
- At the November 2013 Council meeting, the SSC reviews the abbreviated update, the Council adopts a revised COP 9, and adopts management measures for January - June of 2014.
- In February 2014, conduct a full stock assessment review for the following July 1 start date. SSC reviews in April.
- In April 2014, Council adopts the full stock assessment and management measures for July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015.

At their joint meeting in May 2013, the CPSMT again reviewed these steps and discussed the approach with the SSC CPS subcommittee and the subcommittee concurred.

Under the CPS FMP, the Point of Concern Framework provides the mechanism to make modifications to management procedures without the need to amend the FMP. Accordingly, the fishery start date can be accomplished through regulatory action. Implementation of a July 1 start date will require a two meeting process and a regulation amendment via federal rule-making action. Under this scenario, the April 2013 meeting could constitute the first of the two meetings, and June 2013 the second.

In conclusion, the CPSMT recommends the Council adopt a fishing year start date of July 1 for the Pacific sardine fishery.

PFMC  
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