

## CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

Management measures for groundfish are set by the Council with the general understanding that these measures will likely need to be adjusted within the biennium to attain, but not exceed, the annual catch limits (ACL). This agenda item will consider inseason adjustments to remaining 2014 fisheries and 2015 fisheries. Potential inseason adjustments include adjustments to Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundaries and adjustments to commercial and recreational fishery catch limits. Adjustments are, in part, based on recent landings and the latest information from the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program.

### *2014 Pacific Whiting Fishery Catches of Darkblotched Rockfish and Chinook Salmon*

On October 17, 2014, an emergency Council meeting was held to consider inseason adjustments to 2014 trawl fisheries related to Pacific whiting, darkblotched rockfish, and the incidental take of Chinook salmon. An emergency Council meeting was necessary because the Pacific whiting mothership cooperative closed itself October 11, 2014 when their darkblotched rockfish allocation was exceeded by 1 metric ton (mt). Approximately 30 percent of the mothership sector Pacific whiting allocation remained unharvested, at a value of approximately \$10 million, given recent price structure. Additionally, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) determined that the Pacific whiting fishery had exceeded the 11,000 Chinook salmon threshold defined in regulation and in the Endangered Species Act (ESA) biological opinion for Chinook salmon. Attainment of the threshold requires NMFS to implement the Ocean Salmon Conservation Zone, which prohibits all vessels from targeting Pacific whiting with midwater gears in waters shallower than 100 fm (see regulations at 660.131(c)(3)), and to reinitiate ESA consultation.

After considering the available information, the Council recommended that NMFS use their automatic authority to reapportion 3 mt of darkblotched rockfish from the catcher-processor sector to the mothership sector and implement the Ocean Salmon Conservation Zone to reduce bycatch of Chinook salmon. The Council recommended using NMFS' automatic authority, as provided for in the groundfish regulations, since implementation would be expeditious, immediately restricting fishing areas to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch and allowing the mothership sector to recommence fishing posthaste. NMFS implemented the darkblotched rockfish reapportionment on October 17, 2014 and the Ocean Salmon Conservation Zone on October 20, 2014 (see <http://tinyurl.com/mhe5xfh> for the NMFS Public Notice). The Council also recommended NMFS continue to work with the mothership and catcher-processor sectors to ensure measures are taken through their respective cooperatives to fish seaward of 150 fm, on a voluntary basis, to further reduce Chinook salmon bycatch.

The Council also recommended that NMFS, through a routine inseason adjustment, transfer 3 mt from the incidental open access off-the-top deductions<sup>1</sup> from the darkblotched rockfish ACL to

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<sup>1</sup> Routine management measures have been previously analyzed, are anticipated to be used inseason, and are defined in regulation. Off-the-top deductions from the ACL account for groundfish mortality in tribal fisheries, scientific research, incidental open access fisheries, and exempted fishing permits. The ACL set-asides, except for tribal fisheries amounts, can be modified through inseason action and made available to other fisheries based on inseason projections.

the catcher-processor sector. Additionally, the Council recommended NMFS use automatic authority to reapportion the unused portion of the Pacific whiting tribal allocation to the shorebased IFQ, mothership, and catcher-processor sectors. Distribution of the tribal allocation to the shorebased IFQ quota would occur only after the shorebased sector was projected to or had attained their original whiting distribution. The Council recommended that, concurrent with the distribution of the tribal quota to the shorebased sector, a Pacific whiting Bycatch Reduction Area be implemented in regulation, which would prohibit all vessels from targeting Pacific whiting with midwater gears shoreward of 150 fm (see regulations at 660.72 and 660.73).

The above-mentioned Council recommendations are intended to achieve the Pacific whiting total allowable catch, while mitigating impacts to overfished and protected species. Detailed information, including the October briefing materials and transmittal letter, can be found on the Council website (<http://tinyurl.com/nssrqz4>). At the November Council meeting, under Agenda Item J.8, the Groundfish Management Team is expected to provide an update on the fishery progress to date.

### *2015 Fisheries*

In September, NMFS notified the Council that the biennial regulations would likely be delayed beyond January 1, 2015 with implementation expected on March 1, 2015. Under such circumstances, the harvest specifications (e.g., ACLs) and management measures (e.g., season dates and limits) that were in place in January and February of 2014 would be in place for the same period in 2015. The 2014 commercial trip limit and RCA boundaries are provided in Agenda J.8.a, Attachment 1. Guidance on evaluating eligible inseason adjustments for 2015 fisheries can be found in Agenda Item J.8.b, NMFS Report.

### **Council Action:**

**Consider information on the status of 2014 fisheries and adopt inseason adjustments for the remaining 2014 fisheries and or 2015, as necessary.**

### Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item J.8.a, Attachment 1. 2014 Pacific Coast Groundfish Trip Limits and RCA Boundaries.
2. Agenda Item J.8.b, NMFS Report. National Marine Fisheries Service Report on Inseason Adjustments for 2015.

### Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
  - b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
  - c. Public Comment
  - d. **Council Action:** Adopt Recommendations for Adjustments to 2014 and 2015 Groundfish Fisheries
- Kelly Ames

PFMC  
10/22/14