



The LINE. A Publication of the Pacific Fishery Management Council

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The Line is a summary of West Coast fisheries news, for fishermen, published four or five times per year. This issue reports on the decisions made at the September 2014 Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting. The Council recommends commercial & recreational fishery management measures for Federal waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon & California. The Council has five public meetings a year. All Council recommendations are subject to approval by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). To sign up for our full newsletter and other notices, go to <http://tinyurl.com/3s5edce>. The public comment deadline for the November Council meeting is October 17; email pfmc.comments@noaa.gov.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES.

Bluefin tuna: Recently National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closed the commercial Pacific bluefin tuna fishery because the 500 metric ton commercial fishery quota was close to being met. The Council asked NMFS to issue a rule to allow incidental take of the fish for non-directed commercial fisheries, with a one metric ton landing limit per trip. The fishery would close when the 500 metric ton West Coast commercial fishery quota is reached. The Council asked NMFS to work closely with the fishing industry to monitor catches. **2015-2016 fisheries:** The U.S. is moving to reduce the recreational catch of bluefin tuna in response to the stock's overfished status. The Council is considering reducing the daily recreational bag limit for bluefin tuna off California to fewer than five fish per day. The current preferred alternative is a two-fish daily bag limit and a six-fish possession limit for multi-day trips. (The current limit is 10 fish per day per angler bag limit with a 30 fish possession limit). The Council will also consider three alternative rules related to processing recreationally-caught tuna at sea south of Point Conception: 1) filleting in a way that allows the number and species of tuna to be determined (this is preferred); 2) heading and gutting only or gutting only; and 3) not allowing processing of tunas. Final action is scheduled for November. **Exempted fishing permits:** The Council approved a preliminary exempted fishing permit (EFP) proposed by the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries. The EFP tests the effectiveness of five different gear types used to harvest swordfish, in comparison to drift gillnet gear. The Council is soliciting new EFPs, and will next discuss EFPs in March 2015. **Hard caps for protected species:** The Council also discussed species caps (take limits) for high-priority protected species such as certain whales and turtles; finfish bycatch caps; and better monitoring for the California drift gillnet fishery. Final action will occur in 2015. **Next meeting:** In November the Council will take final action on Pacific bluefin tuna bag limits and review hard cap alternatives.

FORAGE FISH AND COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES.

Forage fish: The Council confirmed its intent to amend its fishery management plans so each plan includes a list of shared ecosystem component species, which are important in the food chain but are not targeted for harvest. The Council also plans to forbid any new commercial fishing on these species until the full impacts are understood. No new fishing for these species could begin without thorough Council consideration. However, they could be taken incidentally without violating Federal laws, unless they are restricted for other reasons. Final Council action on this issue is scheduled for March 2015. **Sardines.** The Council is considering an adjustment to the way sardine harvest is calculated each year, and will make a final decision at the November meeting.

GROUND FISH.

The Council is reviewing various management tasks associated with groundfish fisheries and adopted the action plan described at <http://tinyurl.com/nbp84qp>, except for

intersector allocation of blackgill rockfish, which will be discussed in November. In November, the Council will also reconsider a registry for open access fishery participants; and consider alternatives for widow rockfish quota share reallocation and related divestiture issues. In 2015 the Council will look at removing the requirement to use selective flatfish trawl gear shoreward of the Rockfish Conservation Area and allowing a year-round midwater nonwhiting fishery. The Council will also consider rules for a midwater recreational sport fishery for Oregon and California; changes to management area restrictions; and various issues related to tracking vessel movements near restricted fishing areas. **Electronic Monitoring:** The Council selected final preferred alternatives for electronic monitoring for the whiting midwater trawl, non-whiting midwater trawl, fixed gear, and bottom trawl fisheries. A full description is online at <http://tinyurl.com/lbp3n25>. The Council wants to have electronic monitoring regulations in place for the whiting fishery by the 2016 season. Similar regulations for the fixed gear, bottom trawl, and non-whiting midwater trawl sectors will not be in place until 2017, at the earliest.

PACIFIC HALIBUT.

The Council adopted seven allocation options meant to provide more fish to the California recreational fishery. The action came in response to new information showing that more halibut were available, and that was more interest in fishing halibut off California, than previously thought. In addition, changes to recreational fishery rules for the entire West Coast were adopted for public review and are online at <http://tinyurl.com/n7jhl9q>. Final Council action is scheduled for November.

FEDERAL BUSINESS.

The Council is sending a letter to President Obama commenting on his Executive Action to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. The letter stresses the importance of transparency and coordination with fishery management councils when creating national monuments, and the need to consider all uses and benefits of an area's natural resources, before designating a national monument. Reauthorization of the **Magnuson-Stevens Act** is on hold until at least until after the November elections.

APPOINTMENTS.

Steve Crooke was appointed to the Sport/Charter seat on the Council's Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel. **Dave Rudie** was appointed to the South of Cape Mendocino Processor seat on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel. **Jessi Doerpinghaus** (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) was appointed to the Groundfish Management Team. **The Council is accepting nominations** for the at-large seat on the Scientific and Statistical Committee. See the Council website (www.pcouncil.org) for details.

NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council will be held November 2014 in Costa Mesa, California.