

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL COMMENTS ON
CAPACITY GOAL AND RELATED ISSUES

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) held a joint meeting with the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) on March 9th to continue the discussion on determining a capacity goal for the coastal pelagics finfish limited entry fleet. Defining a capacity goal and related management options continues to be a complex issue with the CPSAS. Other unsettled issues such as squid management in California and developing fisheries in northern states make defining an exact capacity goal for finfish difficult. However, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has asked the CPSMT and CPSAS to recommend a capacity goal for the fishery as well as mechanisms needed to reach that goal.

A majority of the CPSAS recommends the following:

Capacity Goal

1. The CPSAS recommends supporting Option 1 as identified in the CPSMT Report.
(Motion passed 6 to 3)

The CPSAS continues to support a larger, more diverse fleet. While pinpointing an exact capacity goal is difficult, the CPSAS did agree that the current make-up of the fleet (65 boats) should be sufficient to harvest the resource currently available.

The CPSAS wants to ensure the Council thoroughly understands the dynamics of the coastal pelagic industry. There are relatively few finfish specialists. The report provided by the CPSMT identifies 3 vessels which are CPS 'purists', they make up less than 5% of the current fleet. This is important to note, because it reflects the realities of the coastal pelagic fleet: the majority of fishers must rely on other fisheries such as tuna and squid to survive, not just cps finfish.

The CPSAS would like the Council to recognize that defining normal operating conditions in the CPS fishery is near impossible. Harvesters typically switch between species based on availability, domestic and international markets, and sometimes even weather. Other issues that further compound the problem of defining an exact capacity option include perceived "latent" capacity. It is important to note that just because a boat can carry 100 tons of product does not mean that it will consistently deliver that amount of fish. In fact, it is likely that the vessel will deliver half of what it could pack, utilizing the extra hold space to carry additional chilled seawater. By doing this the harvester can bring in a higher quality product that can potentially bring a higher price to the fishermen.

One concern voiced by some CPSAS members was the fact that by endorsing an exact capacity goal (as in Option 1) there may be some preclusion from upgrading vessels.

The CPSAS is opposed to decreasing the current fleet size as Options 2 and 3 would most likely require.

Transferability

2. The CPSAS recommends supporting Option 3 as outlined in the CPSMT report.
(Motion passed unanimously)

During the process of defining and implementing the limited entry program for the finfish fleet the CPSAS has always advocated transferable permits. While some members of the CPSAS continue to support unrestricted transfer of permits the realities of the process indicate that some restrictions must be implemented to prevent significant increases in capacity especially when a capacity goal has been designated. However, many on the panel continue to agree that precluding boats from transferring their permits and upgrading their boats will foster obsolescence in the fleet and prevent the industry from remaining competitive in world markets.

The CPSAS believes that Option 3 as outlined in the CPSMT report is suitable to meet the current and future needs of the fleet.