



Preliminary Report of the 2002 Trial Purse Seine Fishery for Pacific Sardine (*Sardinops sagax*)

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**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE 2002 TRIAL PURSE SEINE FISHERY
FOR PACIFIC SARDINE (*Sardinops sagax*)**

Background

In Washington, sardines are managed under the Emerging Commercial Fishery provisions as a trial commercial fishery. A trial commercial fishery allows the harvest of a newly classified species, or harvest of a previously classified species in a new area or by new means (WAC 220-88-010). The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission first approved a trial ocean purse seine sardine fishery in 2000, and the fishery has occurred for the last years. The target of the trial fishery was sardines; however, incidental catches of anchovy, mackerel, and squid can also be landed.

Goals and Objectives

The goals for this trial fishery were to provide fishing opportunity consistent with the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Coastal Pelagic Species fishery management plan and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) policy, collect information on sardines off Washington to improve the coastwide stock assessment, and document the extent of bycatch occurring in the fishery.

Objectives include:

- Collect length, weight, age, sex, and maturity data from the catch landed into Washington.
- Document bycatch, in terms of species, amount, and condition. Recommend management measures to reduce bycatch, as necessary.
- Document harvest methods, distribution of harvest, and catch per unit of effort.

Fishery Regulations

The trial fishery began on May 15 and is scheduled to continue through October 31, 2002. The fishery is managed under the Pacific Council's northern allocation of the coastwide sardine harvest guideline and to a WDFW harvest guideline of 15,000 mt. Washington purse seine fishers are regulated by a set of permit conditions.

Fishery Description

The fishery opened on May 15, 2002; however, the first landing into Washington occurred on June 10. Through September 3, landings into Washington total 13,079 mt. The Department has issued approximately 30 permits and 13 permit holders have participated in the fishery to date. A total of 353 landings and the majority of the landings (79%) were made into Ilwaco. A comparison of the Washington seasons and landings are contained in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Washington fishery comparisons for 2000, 2001, and preliminary for 2002.

	2000	2001	2002
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			(thru 9/3)
Sardine Harvest	4,791.4 mt	10,837 mt	13,079 mt
# of Landings	153	299	353
# Vessels Participating	3 (88%)	13	13

Figure 1. Monthly sardine landings in 2000, 2001, and preliminary landings for 2002.

Observer Coverage/Logbooks

The purpose of requiring observer coverage is to document total catch and bycatch in the purse seine fishery. Bycatch has been recorded in terms of species, amount, and condition; observers noted whether the fish were released or landed, and whether the fish were alive, dead, or in poor condition. The Department was aiming for 30% coverage and has averaged about 26% overall.

All of the vessels participating in the fishery chose to utilize Department observers, rather than contract with private observer companies. A “sardine hotline” was established for fishers to notify the Department of their planned fishing activities so observer coverage could be scheduled accordingly. Observers were in daily contact with the vessels to schedule onboard trips directly.

Fishers were cooperative in allowing observers on board and in scheduling departure times and locations. In general, logbooks were completed and submitted as requested.

Bycatch

Based on observer data, the bycatch of non-targeted species has been fairly low. Bycatch has included chinook and coho salmon, spiny dogfish, blue shark, and other species. A summary of

the bycatch species and total amounts will be available in WDFW's final report in November 2002.

Biological Samples

Department staff have collected 85 biological samples of 25 sardines each, and have processed a portion of these to date. Otoliths will be extracted and sent to the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) laboratory in LaJolla for age-reading. Accompanying data will include catch date, vessel name, standard lengths of the sardines, individual weights, sex, and maturity (determined using the CDFG Standard Maturity Guide for Wetfish which was based on Hjort, J. (1914) State of Sexual Organs).

Summary of WDFW Activities

WDFW staff developed the processes to implement the trial fishery and administered the observer program, notification process, port sampling, data recording, and biological analyses. Two additional full-time observers were hired and existing staff were utilized to augment our observer program and conduct dockside sampling. The observers worked onboard commercial fishing trips to document bycatch, determine catch composition, and collect market samples.

Samplers monitored unloading at processing plants for incidental catch data, weighed sub-samples of the sardine catch, and collected logbooks to determine harvest distribution, CPUE, and unobserved bycatch information. Additional staff time was spent extracting otoliths, measuring, weighing, and determining sex and maturity of samples, and summarizing observer and logbook information.