

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
PACIFIC SARDINE STOCK ASSESSMENT AND HARVEST GUIDELINE FOR 2003

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) recently met with Dr. Ray Conser (National Marine Fisheries Service) to review results from the latest Pacific sardine stock assessment, which will be used to set a harvest guideline for the 2003 season. The CPSMT concurs with the stock assessment team's analyses, and recommends the Council adopt a harvest guideline of 110,908 metric tons (mt) for the 2003 season.

The CPSMT held a brief discussion on establishing a set-aside and tolerance level for sardine caught incidentally in other CPS fisheries during 2003. The CPSMT defers to the CPS Advisory Subpanel to recommend incidental set-aside and tolerance levels. The CPSMT notes that incidental catch allowances of up to 45% by weight may be established under the CPS fishery management plan (FMP).

The CPSMT briefly discussed planning for a stock assessment review (STAR) panel in September of 2003. The current plan calls for the Pacific sardine and Pacific mackerel stock assessment data and models to be reviewed and to have results available for management of the 2004 sardine fishery and the 2004-2005 mackerel fishery. The CPSMT will appoint a member to participate on the STAR panel, should the event occur.

While the CPSMT considers the current sardine assessment to be based on the best available information, more data on West Coast sardine stock is clearly needed. Development of an improved coastwide sardine assessment model will depend upon gathering fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data for the northern portion of the stock. Fishery sampling by the states of Oregon and Washington is ongoing, but fishery-independent data for the Pacific Northwest region is sparse. Future research efforts should include adult biomass surveys using trawl gear, sonar, and spotter planes, as well as indirect estimates of spawning stock biomass using plankton nets and egg pumps. The CPSMT urges the management bodies and industry to actively pursue funding, which will be vital to improving the sardine assessment.

PFMC
10/29/02