

CONSIDERATION OF LONG-TERM SARDINE HARVEST ALLOCATION

Situation: The Council is considering amending the allocation formula for the Pacific sardine harvest guideline. The coastal pelagic species (CPS) fishery management plan (FMP) states:

5.2.2 Formulas for Allocating Pacific Sardine

The northern area allocation is 33% of the Pacific sardine harvest guideline, and the southern area allocation is 66% of the Pacific sardine harvest guideline. Nine months after the start of the fishing season, any uncaught portion of the harvest guideline will be totaled and reallocated with 50% of the total allocated to the northern area and 50% of the total allocated to the southern fishery area. Reallocation will be carried out by the NMFS Regional Administrator as an automatic measure as described in Section 2.1.

Concern has been expressed the current formula could result in premature closure of a subarea fishery and failure to fully achieve the optimum yield. This is, in part, due to the nature of the northern subarea fishery. Oregon and Washington fisheries typically peak in the summer each year while Monterey, California area fisheries typically peak in the fall. The formula, which reallocates the unused amount of the harvest guideline 50/50 on October 1 of each year, is meant to ensure full utilization of the available harvest.

However, the October 1 reallocation may, in some years, cause premature closure of the northern area fishery. For example, the expanding Oregon and Washington fisheries have the potential to fill the northern subarea quota prior to October 1, which would result in closure of the northern area fishery. This occurred in September 2002. Conversely, if the Monterey fishery starts early, with high landings, and the Pacific Northwest starts late or there is low availability of sardine, Oregon and Washington could be preempted.

For 2002, the Council recommended, and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) took emergency action, to reallocate the unused portion of the sardine harvest guideline prior to October 1. This action allowed the northern subarea sardine fishery to re-open on September 26, 2002.

To address this issue for the long-term, the CPS Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) developed a purpose statement and suite of alternative actions for amending the allocation formula. These were presented to the Council at the September Council meeting:

The CPSAS agrees the purpose of the alternative actions proposed seek to achieve full utilization of the harvest guideline which has not occurred under the federal FMP.

The CPSAS proposes the following allocation options should be forwarded to the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) for analysis:

1. Status quo.
2. Change only current reallocation date to –
 - a. August 1; or
 - b. September 1.
3. Change current subarea definitions –
 - a. Revise subarea definitions; or
 - b. change only current dividing line from Piedras Blancas to Pt. Arena.
4. Change current allocation percentages –
 - a. Revise north/south allocation to some other fraction; or
 - b. divide harvest guideline 50/50.

5. Implement three subquotas verses two.
6. Establish an “off-the-top” set-aside from the annual harvest guideline –
 - a. Give discretion to NMFS Regional Administrator to reallocate annually from a set-aside based on certain criteria (i.e., social and/or economic hardship); or
 - b. [Added by the Council] reallocation of the set-aside would be nondiscretionary. That is, in the event of early attainment of a subarea’s portion of the harvest guideline, the set-aside would be automatically provided to the subarea.
7. Modify FMP language to establish an inseason adjustment mechanism to modify subarea quotas taking into account the harvest in the respective subareas.
8. Eliminate allocation entirely (coast-wide quota).

The Council directed the CPSMT to review the problem statement and management alternatives developed by the CPSAS. For the November Council meeting, the Council asked the CPSMT to report on the economic and biological issues that would need to be considered in analyzing the management alternatives, as well as an estimate on the amount of work the analysis could entail. The Council also requested the CPSMT report on ongoing and needed research on Pacific sardine distribution, stock structure, recruitment, etc. This information is intended to help the Council determine how to engage in and spur on coastal pelagic species-related research initiatives.

At this meeting, the CPSMT will report on their initial consideration of the management alternatives. NMFS will advise on the most appropriate process for revising the sardine allocation framework. Based on the information provided, the Council is scheduled to consider initiation of an FMP or regulatory amendment to address long-term allocation issues.

Council Action: Consider Need and Process for Long-Term Allocation Plan

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit F.3.b, Supplemental CPSMT Report.
2. Exhibit F.3.d, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. Report of the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Consider Need and Process for Long-Term Allocation Plan

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