

Pacific mackerel proposed rule

The Southwest Region published the proposed rule to implement the annual harvest guideline for Pacific mackerel on July 20, 2004 (69 *FR* 43383). The public comment period for the proposed rule ended on August 4, 2004. One comment was received but did not contribute information that would provide a basis for a change in the final specifications. The final rule will be published as soon as practical. The Pacific mackerel fishing season begins on July 1 of each year and ends on June 30 the following year.

Pacific sardine landings

The Pacific sardine resource off California, Oregon, and Washington has a fishing season that starts January 1 and runs through December 31 each year. The harvest guideline for January 1, 2004, through December 31, 2004, is 122,747 metric tons (mt) (68 *FR* 67638, December 3, 2003). The northern allocation is 40,916 mt (north of Pt. Arena 39 00' 00" N. lat.), and the southern allocation is 81,831 mt. As of July 31, 2004, the northern allocation area has landed 14,632 mt (about 36% of their allocation); and the southern allocation area has landed 19,421 (about 24% of their allocation).

CPS Observer Program

The Southwest Region of the National Marine Fisheries Service initiated a year long pilot observer program on California purse seine fishing vessels landing Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) in July 2004. NOAA Fisheries is able to place observers on California purse seine fishing vessels as a condition of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act [50 CFR§ 660.519, Coastal Pelagic Species Fisheries Management Plan] and the vessel's Marine Mammal Authorization Certificate [50 CFR§ 229.7]. The pilot observer program's main focus is to gather data on total catch and bycatch, and on interactions (if any) between their fishing gear and protected species such as marine mammals, sea turtles, and sea birds. Observers were contracted and trained by NOAA Fisheries in the beginning of July 2004. As of August 25th observers completed 10 vessel trips ranging from Moss Landing to San Pedro, California. Out of ten trips, there were two observations of net entanglements of California sea lions (one died and the other was released alive).