

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON PACIFIC SARDINE STOCK ASSESSMENT AND HARVEST GUIDELINE FOR 2005

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) recently met with Dr. Ray Conser, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to review results from the latest Pacific sardine stock assessment, which will be used to set a harvest guideline for the 2005 season. The presentation included the recommended preliminary harvest guideline for the 2005 fishery. The CPSMT agrees the stock assessment is as complete as the best available science and the new ASAP (Age-Structure Assessment Program) model allows. The CPSMT supports use of the biomass estimate presented in the final report for calculating the harvest guideline for 2005.

The CPSMT is pleased that the stock assessment authors are incorporating new information into the model. However, continuation of such research and data collection initiatives is critical to the development of stock assessment models appropriate to Pacific sardine.

Fishery sampling by the states of Oregon and Washington is ongoing, but fishery-independent data for the Pacific Northwest region are sparse and based on a pilot program. More recently, budget constraints have limited the ability of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to employ at-sea observers for the sardine fishery. While Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife continues to employ at-sea observers, budget limitations are also affecting their management programs. The CPSMT recommends the Council urge state and federal management agencies and the fishing industry to actively pursue funding, which will be vital to improving the monitoring, assessment and future management of the coastwide sardine fishery.

Beyond U.S. waters, Mexican harvest of CPS has also rapidly increased in recent years. To ensure fishery sustainability, this increased activity in Mexican CPS fisheries necessitates close coordination of both fishery management and science. This should include, at the very least, the availability of up-to-date Mexican catch statistics for inclusion in CPS assessment models. The CPSMT recommends the Council and NMFS continue to pursue formal cooperative arrangements with Mexican fishery management agencies.

One very positive example of collaboration among scientists and industry representatives from Mexico, the U.S., and Canada (British Columbia) has been the series of Tri-National Sardine Forum meetings. The next Sardine Forum is scheduled for November 15-18, 2004 in La Jolla, California. The Sardine Forum provides an opportunity for industry representatives and fishery scientists from the three nations to share information on the status of their respective fisheries, participate in workshops to improve scientific methods, and garner the perspective of the industry representatives about current fishery trends and the concerns of industry. The CPSMT recommends the Council continue their involvement in the Sardine Forum.

PFMC
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