

INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF OPENING DATE OF CALIFORNIA
SHORE-BASED WHITING FISHERY

Mr. Barry Cohen, a processor from central California and member of the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel, requested Council consideration of a change in the California shore-based whiting season start date from April 15 to March 15 beginning in 2006. The area affected under this proposal are waters south of 40°30' N latitude. The request for an earlier start date for this fishery is predicated on the higher abundance of Pacific whiting in these waters early in the year. Whiting migrate north as the season progresses and are in low abundance south of 40°30' N latitude when the California shore-based fishery opens on April 15. The shore-based whiting fishery south of 40°30' N latitude used to open as early as March 15 but, as interest in the southern fishery waned, the season started later to meet the needs of the California shore-based trawl fleet operating in waters north of 40°30' N latitude. Now, with renewed interest in targeting whiting south of 40°30' N latitude, the earlier start date is requested. It is also noteworthy that the California shore-based whiting fishery south of 42° N latitude operates under an annual 5% cap of the whiting allocated to the coastwide shore-based whiting sector. This ensures that the California fleet, which starts targeting whiting earlier than the northern fleet, will not usurp the whiting quota and prohibit opportunities for the more northern shore-based whiting fleets operating off of Oregon and Washington.

The task under this agenda item is to consider this request for an earlier season start date south of 40°30' N latitude for the shore-based whiting sector. This requires a two-meeting process since changing the primary whiting season is not defined as a routine management measure under the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan or in regulations. If the Council opts to recommend this change in the season start date, then this tentative decision will be announced to the general public subsequent to the June Council meeting. Notice will then be given that final Council consideration will be scheduled for the September Council meeting.

Council Action:

Consider and Recommend the Season Start Date for the 2006 Shore-based Whiting Fishery for Public Review.

Reference Materials: None.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Consider an Adjustment in the Opening Date for 2006 for Public Review

John DeVore

PFMC
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