

PACIFIC SARDINE STOCK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to review the current Pacific sardine stock assessment update and adopt harvest specifications and management measures for the 2009 Pacific sardine fishing season. Due to the potential variability of coastal pelagic species (CPS) populations, assessment updates are conducted annually and full assessments and their accompanying Stock Assessment Review (STAR) process typically occur every third year and were last completed in 2007.

The National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, took the lead in developing the updated assessment of Pacific sardine (Agenda Item G.2.b, Attachment 1). The Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) CPS Subcommittee (Subcommittee), the CPS Management Team (CPSMT), and the CPS Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) reviewed the updated assessment during their October 7-9, 2008 meetings in Portland, Oregon. Like the full assessment conducted in 2007, the 2008 updated assessment generally indicates a decline in the Pacific sardine resource on the west coast.

Although the advisory bodies that participated in the October meetings all shared concerns with the level of uncertainty in the assessment of Pacific sardine, there was disagreement on the validity and application of the 2008 assessment update for use in managing the fishery in 2009. Following the terms of reference for CPS stock assessments adopted in 2007, the Subcommittee found that the new data added to the approved model produced results that were inconsistent with previous assessment results, inconsistencies that require the time, model flexibility, and peer review provided by a STAR panel to fully understand. Therefore, the Subcommittee is anticipated to recommend to the full SSC the use of a forward projection of the 2007 assessment results rather than the updated assessment as the best available science for use in 2009 (Agenda Item G.2.c, SSC CPS Subcommittee Report). Please note that the Subcommittee's report is not considered final until it is reviewed and approved by the full SSC at the November Council meeting.

The CPSMT disagreed with the Subcommittee regarding the inconsistency of the updated assessment and favored its use for 2009 because the updated assessment uses all of the available new data sources and because forward projections to evaluate impacts of different catches are not practicable due to the dynamic annual fluctuations in Pacific sardine abundance and because a principle reason sardine assessments are conducted annually is the uncertainty associated with forward projections (Agenda Item G.2.c, CPSMT Report).

The majority of the CPSAS expressed substantial concerns with the assessment model and the data upon which it is based (Agenda Item G.2.c, CPSAS Report). At the October meetings, the Pacific Northwest sardine industry presented preliminary results from a 2008 pilot program that used aerial survey methods coupled with at-sea hydroacoustic and purse seine sampling. Although the pilot program was not designed to produce an estimate of absolute coastwide Pacific sardine abundance, the results were favorably received and show promise of being further developed into a new index of abundance for future assessments.

The CPSMT and the CPSAS have also provided recommendations on the harvest specification and management measures for the 2009 Pacific sardine fishery.

The full SSC will review the recommendations of its CPS Subcommittee and the CPS advisory bodies regarding the Pacific sardine assessment update and prepare a supplemental statement at the November Council meeting.

Council Action:

Adopt Pacific Sardine Assessment, Harvest Specifications, and Management Measures for 2009.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.2.b, Supplemental Attachment 1: *Assessment of the Pacific Sardine Resource in 2008 for U.S. Management in 2009.*
2. Agenda Item G.2.c, SSC CPS Subcommittee Report (**not final, to be reviewed by the full SSC at the November Council meeting**).
3. Agenda Item G.2.c, CPSMT Report.
4. Agenda Item G.2.c, CPSAS Report.
5. Agenda Item G.2.c, Supplemental SSC Report.
6. Agenda Item G.2.d, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

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| a. Agenda Item Overview | Mike Burner |
| b. NMFS Report | Russ Vetter/Kevin Hill |
| c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies | |
| d. Public Comment | |
| e. Council Action: Adopt Pacific Sardine Harvest Guideline and Management Measures | |

PFMC
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