

PACIFIC WHITING HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS
AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2009

The Pacific whiting fishery management process is unlike that for other Federally-managed west coast groundfish for 2009 fisheries, for which catch specifications and management measures were adopted by the Council at the June 2008 Council meeting for the two-year period 2009-2010. The Council deferred a decision on setting harvest specifications and management measures for the 2009 Pacific whiting fisheries pending the development and review of a new stock assessment to occur during February 2009. A new Pacific whiting assessment was prepared this winter (Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 1) and reviewed by a joint U.S.-Canadian assessment review panel during February 2008 (Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 2). The executive summary of the assessment is included in the briefing book and the assessment in its entirety is found in the CD copy of meeting materials, along with other materials that will be reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The Council should consider the advice of the assessment review panel, the SSC, and other advisors before adopting an assessment for use in management decision-making. The assessment, once approved, will be used to set 2009 Pacific whiting harvest specifications and management measures.

In 2004-2008, this transboundary stock was managed jointly with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, in the spirit of a new process described in a treaty that has been signed and ratified, but awaits final rulemaking. The primary tenets of the treaty include a joint U.S.-Canada annual assessment and management process (which will presumably be implemented next year), a research commitment, and a harvest sharing agreement providing 73.88 percent of the coastwide optimum yield (OY) for U.S. fisheries and 26.12 percent for Canadian fisheries.

The Council is tasked with setting an acceptable biological catch (ABC) and OY for Pacific whiting that will be used to manage 2009 fisheries and management measures to properly prosecute the fishery. Considerations for this decision include the stock's current and projected status with respect to the overfished threshold, the international agreement with Canada, and overfished species' bycatch concerns. Unless there is a change in the research, non-whiting fishery bycatch, and tribal set-asides, once the OY is set, the apportionment within the non-tribal fisheries is set automatically via the existing intersector allocation (i.e., 42 percent for the shoreside whiting sector, 24 percent for the at-sea mothership whiting sector, and 34 percent for the at-sea catcher-processor whiting sector).

The Council is also tasked with deciding management measures for 2009 Pacific whiting fisheries. The Council adopted some management measures for the 2009 whiting fishery last June when deciding management measures for 2009 and 2010 fisheries. While the Council decided there would be sector-specific bycatch limits specified for the 2009 whiting fishery that would be apportioned according to the pro-rata whiting allocations, final sector bycatch limits will be decided at this meeting as part of the inseason action under agenda items G.2 and G.7 so that bycatch amounts can be allocated in the context of the needs of all groundfish fisheries.

The Council also set aside 50,000 mt of whiting for 2009 tribal whiting fisheries at the June 2008 Council meeting, with 42,000 mt set aside for the Makah Tribe and 8,000 mt set aside for the

Quileute Indian Tribe. A letter from Mr. Mel Moon, Jr., of the Quileute Indian Tribe is provided that takes issue with this decision (Agenda Item G.1.b, Tribal Report).

Council Action:

1. **Adopt the 2009 Pacific whiting stock assessment.**
2. **Adopt a 2009 ABC and OY for Pacific whiting.**
3. **Adopt 2009 Pacific whiting management measures.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 1: Executive Summary of Stock Assessment of Pacific Hake, *Merluccius productus*, (a.k.a. Whiting) in U.S. and Canadian Waters in 2009.
2. Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 2: Pacific Whiting – The Joint U.S.-Canada STAR Panel Report.
3. Agenda Item G.1.b, NMFS Report: January 14 letter from Frank Lockhart to Don Hansen regarding the NMFS plan to prosecute the 2009 shoreside whiting fishery under an EFP.
4. Agenda Item G.1.b, Tribal Report: November 3, 2008 letter from Mr. Mel Moon, Jr. of the Quileute Indian Tribe to the Pacific Fishery Management Council regarding the 2009 tribal whiting set-asides.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
 - b. Reports and Comments of Agencies and Advisory Bodies
 - c. Public Comment
 - d. **Council Action:** Adopt Final 2009 Stock Assessment, Allowable Biological Catch, Optimum Yield, and Management Measures
- John DeVore

PFMC
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