

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
PACIFIC MACKEREL MANAGEMENT FOR 2009-2010

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) heard a report from Dr. Paul Crone of the Pacific Mackerel Stock Assessment Team and Dr. Owen Hamel, Pacific Mackerel Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel representative, regarding the Pacific mackerel stock assessment and proposed harvest guideline (HG) for the 2009-2010 season. The CPSAS thanks and commends Dr. Crone, Dr. Hamel and the Pacific Mackerel Assessment Team for their dedication and hard work in developing the recommendation.

The CPSAS, sadly, supports the assessment team and the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) finding that this assessment is based on the best available science. The CPSAS concurs with the CPSMT and STAR Panel that the final base model (SS – AA) model finding of 282,000 mt age 1+ biomass should be used in the harvest control rule formula in the calculation of the allowable biological catch (ABC) for the 2009-2010 season.

Based on the current assessment and harvest control rule for Pacific mackerel, the ABC for the 2009-2010 season is estimated to be 55,408 metric tons (mt). The CPSAS acknowledges the SSC and CPSMT recommendation to set an HG below the ABC in light of uncertainty reflected in the alternative model (SS-AB). The CPSAS recommends setting a HG of 35,000 mt, 30,000 mt of which is for use in the directed fishery, with 5,000 mt set aside for incidental catches in other fisheries or the possibility of reopening the directed fishery. This leaves a substantial buffer between the HG and the ABC as a precautionary measure.

The CPSAS strongly recommends that better data and better monitoring of the commercial passenger fishing vessel (CPFV) fleet are essential to better inform this index of abundance, particularly now that the CPFV index is the sole index remaining in the SS model. This research is sorely needed to produce more accurate Pacific mackerel stock assessments in the future. In addition, the CPSAS recommends exploring alternative indices that might inform the assessment. One potential source of data in the future could be to include mackerel in the aerial survey that is now scheduled to be conducted by industry in the sardine fishery.

The CPSAS further recommends that the Council provide guidance to the National Marine Fisheries Service that, in the event the directed fishery reaches 30,000 mt and closes, allow a 45 percent incidental catch allowance when Pacific mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species (CPS), except that up to 1 mt of Pacific mackerel could be landed without landing any other CPS.