

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY REVIEW AND EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT (EFP)

At its March 2009 meeting, the Council reviewed proposals for aerial survey research on Pacific sardine to be conducted under an exempted fishing permit with the goal of developing a new index of sardine abundance. The Council adopted the proposals for public review and recommended that they ultimately be combined into a single project managed under its own collaborative team guided by a scientifically sound survey design. Sardine industry representatives and scientists have since collaborated on a single proposal (Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 1).

The Council conducted a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel May 4-8, 2009 in La Jolla, California to, in part, review survey methodologies proposed for 2009. The May STAR Panel reviewed both the industry proposed aerial survey as well as the Pacific sardine biomass survey conducted annually by the National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS), Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) (Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 2). The May STAR Panel recommendations are contained in two separate reports; one for the industry proposed aerial survey (Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 3) and one for the SWFSC biomass survey (Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 4). Survey methodologies and the STAR Panel reports will be reviewed at the June meeting by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT), and the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) (see Ancillary Meetings for details).

The Council heard testimony in March that the survey proposals will likely require an increase in the 2009 research set-aside from 1,200 mt to 2,400 mt in order to conduct the survey work from Cape Flattery, Washington to Monterey Bay, California. The May STAR Panel concluded that a set-aside of 2,400 mt provides a “good outlook” for survey success and that if the set-aside remains at 1,200 mt, the geographic scope of the survey should be reduced to maintain adequate sample sizes. At the Council’s request, NMFS has initiated the necessary rulemaking to increase the research set-aside to 2,400 mt by reducing the directed sardine fishery in the second and third fishing periods (Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 5). The comment period for the proposed rulemaking runs through June 5, 2009. The Council continues to support limiting use of the research set-aside to the second allocation period (July 1 through September 14, 2009) with any unused portion of the research set-aside to be transferred to the third period of the directed fishery.

At the June meeting the Council is tasked with adopting final recommendations to NMFS regarding the issuance of an exempted fishing permit for conducting the industry proposed aerial survey in the second period of the 2009 Pacific sardine fishery. The Council may also provide guidance on the implementation of Pacific sardine surveys in 2009, including their potential application to the next full assessment of Pacific Sardine in the fall of 2009. This full assessment and its supporting data and indices will be the subject of a September 21-28, 2009 STAR Panel and subsequent review by the Council and its Advisory Bodies at the November 2009 Council meeting in Costa Mesa, California.

**Council Action:**

1. **Adopt final Exempted Fishing Permit recommendations;**
2. **Provide guidance on the implementation of Pacific sardine surveys in 2009, including their potential application to the next full assessment of Pacific Sardine in the fall of 2009.**

**Reference Materials:**

1. Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 1: West Coast Sardine Survey Application for Exempted Fishing Permit in 2009.
2. Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 2: Spawning Biomass of Pacific Sardine (*Sardinops sagax*) Off U.S. in 2008, NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS.
3. Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 3: STAR Panel Report, Aerial Survey Methods for Pacific Sardine, May 2009.
4. Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 4: STAR Panel Report, Daily Egg Production Methods for Pacific Sardine, May 2009.
5. Agenda Item H.2.a, Attachment 5: NMFS Proposed Rule, Coastal Pelagic Species Fisheries, Annual Specifications Modification, (74FR20897).
6. Agenda Item H.2.b, Supplemental SSC Report.
7. Agenda Item H.2.b, Supplemental CPSMT Report.
8. Agenda Item H.2.b, Supplemental CPSAS Report.
9. Agenda Item H.2.c, Public Comment.

**Agenda Order:**

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Final EFP Recommendations

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