The LINE. A Publication of the Pacific Fishery Management Council

The Line is a summary of West Coast fisheries news, for fishermen, published five times per year. This issue reports on the decisions made at the June 2013 Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting. The Council (www.pcouncil.org) recommends commercial & recreational fishery management measures for Federal waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon & California. The Council has five public meetings a year. All Council recommendations are subject to approval by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). To sign up for our full newsletter and other notices, go to http://tinyurl.com/3s5edce.

GROUNDFISH.

The Council is considering a **mid-water recreational fishery** in Oregon and California that could start on January 1, 2015. The fishery would provide more access to healthy pelagic groundfish (such as yellowtail rockfish) while minimizing overfished species bycatch. • The Council is seeking public review of alternatives for **avoiding seabird bycatch** (see http://tinyurl.com/jwshycj). Streamer lines would be required during setting operations on commercial longline vessels 55 feet or longer, with a possible exemption for rough weather. Final action is scheduled for November. • A new workgroup will discuss **electronic monitoring** systems that could take the place of some human observers on groundfish trawl vessels. The Council will discuss this further in September. • The Council is redefining which species should be managed in current **stock complexes** in order to align stock complexes for species with similar life histories, vulnerabilities to the fishery, and responses to management measures. • The Council's Groundfish Management Team will analyze the implications of these alternatives at their next meeting. • For the **current season**, the Council recommended increasing the fixed gear trip limits for sablefish north of 36° N. latitude, shortspine thornyhead north of 34°27' N. latitude, shelf rockfish south of 34°27' N. latitude, and bocaccio rockfish south of 34°27' N. latitude (see http://tinyurl.com/ncxombk) • The Council also adopted an approach for issuing 2012 **lingcod** surplus carryover into the 2013 shorebased individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery (see http://tinyurl.com/kt5vhn3).

HABITAT.

The Council's Habitat Committee is preparing a draft letter to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, responding to its request for information on the environmental effect of **offshore wind energy**, for the September Council meeting.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT.

In order to protect currently unmanaged **forage fish**, the Council reviewed proposed changes to the Federal List of Authorized Fisheries and Gear, which sets down which fisheries and gear types are currently allowed. The Council proposed some changes to the list and is seeking public comment (see http://tinyurl.com/pnelxm7). The Council plans to take final action in September.

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES.

The Council adopted management measures and harvest specifications for **Pacific mackerel** for the 2013-2014 fishing year. These include an overfishing limit of 57,316 mt, acceptable biological catch and annual catch limit of 52,358 mt, and an annual catch target of 39,268 mt. The 13,089 mt difference between the annual catch limit and annual catch target is an incidental catch buffer. Some of the buffer may be released for harvest in April 2014 if the annual catch target has been met or approached. • The management schedule for Pacific mackerel has been changed. The new schedule calls for full stock assessments every four years starting in 2015. Biennial harvest specifications will be made for two years at a time. • The Council voted to change start date for **Pacific sardine** to July 1, starting in 2014. The Council will further discuss sardine harvest parameters in November 2013.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES.

In response to the listing of Pacific **bluefin tuna** as "overfished," the Council may consider bag limits for Pacific bluefin in West Coast recreational fisheries in 2014. The Council is calling for more protection of bluefin in international fisheries, where 98% of bluefin harvest occurs.

ENFORCEMENT.

The Council is considering requiring vessel monitoring systems (VMS) for commercial **tuna vessels** 24 meters (78.7 feet) or more in length. Final action is scheduled for the Council's November meeting. • Vessels whose VMS systems are registered with National Marine Fisheries Service are now required to declare the fishery in which they are participating, regardless of whether or not they have entered the groundfish fishery.

OTHER BUSINESS.

The Council approved a calendar year 2013 budget which should maintain near status quo operations for the year. • **Dan Wolford** and **Herb Pollard** were reappointed to their current Council seats for an additional three-year term. • **Dorothy Lowman** will serve as Council Chair and **Herb Pollard** will serve as Vice Chair for the 2013-2014 term starting August 10. • A new ad hoc **Ecosystem Workgroup** will address the forage fish protection initiative of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan. • The Council created a new ad hoc **Trawl Electronic Monitoring Workgroup** (Dave Hanson, Brent Paine, Heather Mann, Paul Kujala , Travis Hunter, Bob Alverson, Geoff Bettencourt, Howard McElderry and Shems Jud), and an ad hoc **Trawl Electronic Monitoring Technical Advisory Committee.** The Council also established an **Endangered Species Workgroup** to work on issues related to groundfish management. For this workgroup the Council is seeking experts on fish, seabird, marine mammal, and sea turtle taxonomy.

NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for September 12-17, 2013 in **Boise, Idaho**. The preliminary proposed agenda is available at http://tinyurl.com/nbfw2l8; a more detailed agenda will be available in mid-August. Follow the Council agenda on **Twitter** at @PFMCAgenda, and follow us on **Facebook** at http://www.facebook.com/PacificFisheryManagementCouncil.