



The LINE. A Publication of the Pacific Fishery Management Council

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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 September 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>. The public comment deadline for the November Council meeting is October 9; email pfmc.comments@noaa.gov.

PACIFIC HALIBUT.

The Council adopted possible changes to the 2014 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan, and recreational fishery regulations for the West Coast, for public review. These changes include a proposal to establish a new subarea management line at the Oregon/California border, creating a separate California subarea, possibly with its own Pacific halibut allocation. The Oregon portion, between Humbug Mountain and the Oregon/California border, would be included in the Central Oregon Coast Subarea, or become a new area. Details can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/ph6nnwq>, with final decisions scheduled for November.

SALMON.

The Council will send a letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding problems associated with the increase in double-crested cormorants nesting on Sand Island in the Columbia River estuary. The letter will urge the Corps to analyze the effects of cormorants on salmon and to allow Council comment on proposed management measures. • The Council selected topics for its annual review of methods used to assess salmon stocks. A meeting on the subject will be held October 1-3, 2013 in Portland. • The Council approved Amendment 18 to the salmon fishery management plan, which makes changes to essential fish habitat provisions. • The Council is interested in an alternative harvest control rule for Sacramento River winter Chinook in order to maintain protections for the stock while providing minimal, rather than zero, incidental catch. NMFS is expected to announce a public comment period on the topic in the spring of 2014.

HABITAT.

The Council is sending a letter to the Department of Energy on the environmental effects of offshore wind energy development, including the importance of working with the fishing industry in advance to site projects appropriately.

GROUND FISH.

On October 15-16, the Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee will meet in Seattle to discuss developing alternatives for electronic monitoring of vessels in the trawl catch share program, and related issues such as a “phased in” approach to electronic monitoring, starting with mid-water trawl and fixed gear fisheries, then a separate phase for bottom trawl fisheries. Northwest Fisheries Science Center will report in November on how the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program may move forward under an electronic monitoring program for mid-water trawl, fixed gear, and possibly bottom trawl. • The sablefish permit stacking program is being reviewed, with final Council action scheduled for June 2014. The Council is asking that for the November Council meeting, members of the public identify any issue that may warrant a change. Contact jim.

seger@noaa.gov for more information. • Assessments for aurora rockfish, rougheye/blackspotted rockfish, short-spine thornyhead, longspine thornyhead, and cowcod were approved for use in management in 2015 and beyond. The new assessments show the stocks to be healthy, except for cowcod, which has been listed as “overfished” since 1999. However, cowcod status has improved. • The Council adopted overfishing limits, stock category designations, and a new target harvest rate for elasmobranchs (assessed sharks and skates). • Final 2015 and 2016 groundfish harvest specifications will be set in April 2014, and management measures will be developed at the Council meeting in June 2014, with refinement of these decisions scheduled for the November 2013 Council meeting. • The Council plans to discuss changes to the “Other Fish” groundfish stock complex (<http://tinyurl.com/pln82fq>) at its November meeting. • The Council adopted increases in the sablefish trip limits for the limited entry and open access fixed gear fisheries north of 36° N. latitude and for the open access fixed gear fishery south of 36° N. latitude. Additionally, trip limit increases for deeper nearshore rockfish were adopted for the limited entry and open access fixed gear fishery south of 40°10' N. latitude. For more information, see <http://tinyurl.com/pnnz3m6>. • The Council also recommended that the eligible 2012 surplus carryover of petrale sole (20 mt) be issued to the 2013 shorebased IFQ fishery as soon as possible. • Beginning in Period 6 in 2013 and through 2014, the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area boundary lines between 40°10' and 48°10' N. latitude will be 100 fm shoreward and 150 fm seaward.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT.

The Council updated the Federal list of legal fisheries and gear off the West Coast. • The following list of species were identified as needing additional protection against development of new fisheries: round and thread herring, mesopelagic fishes, Pacific sandlance, Pacific saury, Silversides, Osmerid smelts, and Pelagic squids (with the exception of Humboldt squid). Advisory bodies will develop alternatives to prohibit new commercial fisheries on these species groups through amendments to one or more fishery management plans.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.

The Council adopted 17 areas for potential changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act (the main Federal legislation that dictates how fisheries are managed) with the expectation that other potential changes will be discussed in the future. See <http://tinyurl.com/nycj76k>. • The Council is writing a letter to Congresswoman Herrera-Beutler stating the Council’s support of H.R. 2646 and S. 1275 (the Revitalizing the Economy of Fisheries in the Pacific Act), which proposes to refinance the trawl buyback loan at a lower interest rate. The Council is also planning to request a dedicated Council seat on the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission.