



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E.
Seattle, Washington 98115

March 23, 2015

150413WCR2015SF00075

Ms. Dorothy Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place
Portland, Oregon 97220

Dear Ms. Lowman:

By this letter, I am approving Amendment 14 to the Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which establishes an F_{MSY} of 0.3 as the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) reference point for the northern subpopulation of northern anchovy in the CPS FMP.

NMFS has determined that an F_{MSY} equal to 0.3, as recommended by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), represents the best available information for an MSY value for this stock. As noted by the Council in the transmittal of Amendment 14 to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), this estimate was also deemed an appropriate specification of an estimate of MSY by the Council's Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) following considerable discussion and review of all the scientific information available on the stock that was prepared and presented to them by the Council's CPS Management Team.

NMFS understands that an F_{MSY} equal to 0.3 was deemed an appropriate specification of MSY by the SSC. In part, the SSC made this recommendation because 0.3 is also the default exploitation rate for Pacific mackerel, a stock for which more information is known regarding stock variability and productivity. Based on what information is known about northern anchovy, it is assumed they are at least as productive as Pacific mackerel, and likely have higher natural mortality, which would typically be associated with a higher F_{MSY} .

This is an appropriate approach in light of both the high uncertainty in the available biomass estimates for this stock and large fluctuations in stock biomass that are known to occur in species such as anchovy. A fixed biomass-based approach to specifying MSY would likely not be appropriate. Additionally, because the northern subpopulation of northern anchovy is lightly fished, with inconsistent effort over time, the existing time series of catch was likely an unreliable indicator of stock status and, therefore, determining a catch-based MSY would not be meaningful.

On April 12, 2013, the U.S. District Court in San Francisco granted the agency summary judgment on all but one issue in a lawsuit filed by Oceana challenging Amendment 13 (annual catch limit amendment) to the CPS FMP, which was implemented in 2011. The one issue on which the Court issued summary judgment against NOAA was the CPS FMP's lack of an MSY specification for the northern subpopulation of northern anchovy. The decision to specify MSY



was remanded back to the Secretary for action consistent with the Court's order. As a result of the summary judgment, NMFS sent a letter to the Council in June 2013 requesting it address MSY for the northern subpopulation of northern anchovy.

NMFS appreciates the Council's efforts to determine an appropriate estimate of MSY for the northern subpopulation of northern anchovy stock and to amend the CPS FMP to establish this reference point. We recognize that reference points for some CPS stocks, such as the northern subpopulation of northern anchovy, are difficult to determine due to the limited data available to estimate biomass and productivity over time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William Stelle, Jr." in a cursive style.

William W. Stelle, Jr.
Regional Administrator