

Decision Summary Document Pacific Fishery Management Council

March 8-12, 2015

Council Meeting Decision Summary Documents are highlights of decisions made at Council meetings. For a more detailed account of Council meeting discussions, see the [Council meeting record and voting logs](#) or the [Council newsletter](#).

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Review of Fishery Ecosystem Plan Initiatives

The Council adopted a new Fishery Ecosystem Plan initiative as described in [Agenda Item E.2.b, Supplemental Ecosystem Workgroup Report](#), “Coordinated Ecosystem Indicator Review Initiative.” This initiative would refine and improve the ecosystem indicators presented the Annual State of the California Current Ecosystem Report. The Council directed the Ecosystem Working Group, the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Team, and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Ecosystem Subcommittee members to assess the overall performance of the indicators and how they can be better linked to management decision-making. The results of this review would be shared with Council management teams and advisory subpanels for their feedback prior to a Council final decision. The Council also directed the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) to modify Initiative A.2.8 “Cross-FMP Effects of Climate Shift Initiative” for consistency with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Draft Climate Science Strategy. The EWG were tasked with providing a workload assessment and timeline for both initiatives to the Council, including options for engaging advisory bodies.

During the Future Meeting Planning agenda item, a report on the results of this effort was later scheduled for the September, 2015 Council meeting.

NMFS Climate Science Strategy Update

The Council tasked the Executive Director to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries in support of the draft NOAA Climate Change Strategy and the priority actions described in Chapter 3 and the dedication of new resources for implementation of the Strategy over the next five years, given the importance of maintaining current support for data collection, analyses, and stock assessments. The letter will also describe the Council’s actions to date, including recent action under Agenda Item E.2, that directly relate to the purpose of the Strategy and its priority actions.

Unmanaged Forage Fish Protection Final Action

The Council adopted Alternative 2 that amends all four Council Fishery Management Plans to add a suite of currently unmanaged forage fish species and prohibit the development of new directed commercial fisheries. After lengthy discussion about designing an appropriate incidental take

limit that would not impair current fisheries for other species yet still prohibit directed fishing on currently unmanaged forage fish species, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) was tasked with developing draft implementing regulations to include an incidental take limit for Council review and approval through a regulatory deeming process at the September, 2015 Council meeting.

PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

Incidental Catch Recommendations for the Salmon Troll and Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries

The Council confirmed the existing halibut landing ratios for the commercial salmon troll fisheries from April 1-30, 2015 of no more than one halibut per each four Chinook, except one halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement and no more than 12 halibut may be possessed or landed per trip. The Council also adopted [three options](#) for public review for halibut landing ratios in the salmon troll fisheries from May 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015 and April 1-30, 2016. The options are:

- Option 1 (status quo): one halibut per four chinook plus one with a 12 halibut per trip limit
- Option 2: one halibut per five Chinook plus one with a ten halibut limit
- Option 3: one halibut per five Chinook plus one with an eight halibut

Final action is scheduled for the April Council meeting.

The Council also confirmed the existing halibut landing restrictions for the sablefish primary fixed gear fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, Washington from April 1, 2015 to October 31, 2015. The limits are 75 pounds dressed weight of halibut for every 1,000 pounds dressed weight of sablefish landed and up to two additional halibut in excess of the ratio per landing.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Final Exempted Fishing Permit Approval

The Council reviewed five Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications submitted in response to a solicitation for proposals to test alternative gears and methods for the current California large mesh gillnet fishery targeting swordfish. The Council adopted the following to apply to all EFPs recommended to move forward.

- 100 percent observer coverage
- EFP fishing prohibited in waters north of the Washington/Oregon border (46° 15' N. lat.) and in the first year EFP fishing is prohibited in waters north of the Oregon/California border

- NMFS to close fishing under any EFP for the remainder of the year if the amount of an Endangered Species Act (ESA) -listed species taken in that EFP fishery is the lower of either double the amount of incidental take estimated in an ESA biological opinion prepared for that activity or 10 animals
- EFPs testing buoy gear only will be permitted in Federal waters

The Council recommended the following applications to NMFS for EFP issuance for the 2015 fishing season:

1. Application submitted by Pete Dupuy, John Gibbs, David Haworth to test pelagic longline gear inside the west coast Exclusive Economic Zone ([Agenda Item H.3.a, Attachment 1](#)) with the following additional conditions:
 - a. Only one vessel to be permitted versus three as proposed by the applicants
 - b. Applicants must specify the level of expected fishing effort beyond the first six months of the term of the EFP
 - c. Fishing is prohibited within 50 miles of the mainland shore and islands
 - d. A bycatch limit for marlins is to be developed by NMFS; the fishery would close for the remainder of the year if the bycatch limit is reached
2. Application submitted by Pflieger Institute of Environmental Research (PIER) to test buoy gear ([Agenda Item H.3.a, Attachment 2](#)) without additional conditions
3. Application submitted by Tim and Laura Ferguson to test several new gear types. The Council recommends that NMFS issue an EFP for only that portion of the proposal intended to test buoy gear.
4. Application submitted by Stephen R. Mintz to test buoy gear ([Agenda Item H.3.a, Attachment 4](#)) with the following additional condition: NMFS is to work with the applicant to identify specific procedures for data collection, analysis, and reporting including the appropriate agencies to which information will be provided

The Council requested revisions the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries (ACSF) application ([Agenda Item H.3.a, Attachment 5](#)) to provide sufficient detail on the scientific design to allow SSC review. The resubmitted application will be considered at the June 2015 meeting for final action.

(Note: The description of this EFP decision was revised on March 18, 2015, from the description originally posted on March 16, 2015.)

Drift Gillnet Management and Monitoring Plan Including Final Action on Hard Caps

The Council deferred final action on adopting hard caps for the drift gillnet fishery until the June 2015 meeting, in recognition of Secretarial review for implementing final action on hard caps could not be completed in time for the 2015 fishing season. The Council also expanded the scope of the management and monitoring plan to be the “Swordfish Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP).” The Council also made revisions to the description of the proposed action and the purpose and need statement for the SMMP. The Council affirmed its commitment to continue progress on finfish performance standards and revisit potential measures at a future date.

The Council provided the following direction to the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) in moving forward with developing the SMMP:

- Analyze a second preliminary preferred alternative proposed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The CDFW alternative does not replace the preliminary preferred alternative that the Council adopted in September 2014. This additional alternative would establish hard caps based on observed entanglement in drift gillnet fishing gear of the high priority protected species identified in the Council Preliminary Preferred Alternative.
- Analyze an additional alternative for performance objectives for non-ESA listed marine mammals based on the highest level observed during any one year during a five-year period (2010-2014).
- Analyze historical fishery performance under the range of alternatives, including the CDFW PPA, for hard caps on high priority species or species of concern.
- With assistance from NMFS staff including provision of all existing observer data, the HMSMT was tasked with analyzing observer coverage levels necessary to estimate protected species bycatch with reasonable accuracy.

The Council requested the SSC to review the current bycatch estimation methodology used to produce bycatch estimates for the past five years. It was also requested to review the HMSMT analysis of observer coverage levels when completed.

The HMSMT and SSC are scheduled to report their results to the Council in June 2015.

SALMON MANAGEMENT

Adoption of 2015 Management Alternatives for Public Review

The Council adopted three Alternative sets of management measures for the 2015 ocean commercial, recreational, and tribal salmon fisheries. The detailed alternatives can be found on the Council web page at: <http://www.pcouncil.org/2015/03/29477/sal-alt-2015-public-review/>

Public hearings on the Alternatives have been scheduled in Westport, WA and Coos Bay, OR for March 30 and Fort Bragg, California for March 31. The Council is scheduled to adopt final 2015 ocean salmon regulations at its April 10-16, 2015 meeting in Rohnert Park, CA.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Legislative Matters

The Council adopted the recommendations of the Legislative Committee report ([I.1.b, Supplemental Legislative Report](#)), including three letters:

- a letter to President Obama and the Office of Management and Budget regarding implementation of the REFI Act;
- a letter to Reps. Young and Bishop on HR 1335 with particular reference to National Environmental Policy Act compliance implications; and
- a letter to the House Committee on Natural Resources regarding HR 774, the Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act.

The substance of recommendations of the GAP report ([Agenda Item I.1.c, Supplemental GAP Report](#)) and the HMSAS Report ([Agenda Item I.1.c, Supplemental HMSAS Report](#)) should be included in the letters, as will relevant portions of public comment.

In addition, the Council adopted the results of the LC review of the Council's Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization priority issues, which retained the 21 items identified in 2014 and added an additional priority issue regarding the need for international fishery negotiations to be added to the list of eligible topics for discussion in Council closed executive sessions.

National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region Strategic Plan Update

The Council directed staff to submit a letter to NMFS with minor recommendations for changes and additions to the Public Review Draft of the NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region Strategic Plan: 2016-2020.

Approval of Council Meeting Minutes

The Council approved the June 2014 and October 2014 (emergency) Council meeting minutes.

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

The Council made the following appointments:

- Dr. Cameron Speir to replace Dr. Cindy Thomson as the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) representative on the SSC.
- Ms. Celia Barrosa to replace Ms. Heidi Taylor as one of the NMFS West Coast Region representatives on the HMSMT.
- Mr. Josh Lindsey to fill the vacant NMFS seat on the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team resulting from the retirement of Dr. Sam Herrick.
- Ms. Gretchen Hanshew to replace Dr. Sean Matson as one of the NMFS West Coast Region representatives on the Groundfish Management Team.
- Dr. Melissa Monk to replace Ms. Rosemary Kosaka as the NMFS SWFSC representatives on the GMT.
- Mr. Jerry Leonard to replace Dr. Ian Taylor as the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center representative on the GMT.
- Dr. Tomo Eguchi to replace Dr. Rhema Bjorkland as the Turtle Taxon Expert on the Endangered Species Workgroup (ESWG).

- Ms. Sarah Williams to replace Ms. Alison Agness to the ESWG seat which was reclassified from a protected resources seat to an additional West Coast Region seat.
- Mr. Tyler Turner to replace Mr. Butler as the Oregon Charter representative on the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP).
- Mr. Robert Mirante to replace Mr. Mark Cedergreen as the Washington Charter representative on the GAP.

The Council announced Dr. Caren Braby is the alternate for Ms. Michele Culver on the Regional Planning Body for West Coast Region

The Council also announced Sergeant Todd Thompson was designated as an alternate for Lieutenant Tim Schwartz as the Oregon State Police representative on the Enforcement Consultants.

The Council adopted an updated Council Operating Procedure, which modified the membership of the ESWG.

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for April 2015 in Rohnert Park, California. A single page proposed agenda summary is available on the Council website and a draft detailed proposed agenda is scheduled to be available by April 1.

PFMC
03/18/2015