

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON ANCHOVY UPDATE

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) and Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) received a joint briefing from Kirk Lynn, California Department of Fish and Wildlife member of the CPSMT, on the team's reports on northern anchovy landings and CPS monitoring and management activities. The CPSAS also reviewed Agenda Items under G.3.a, and Supplemental Reports as well as public comments.

The CPSAS recognizes and encourages efforts of the CPSMT and states to increase sampling for both central and northern anchovy stocks, as well as other CPS. Regarding the central anchovy stock, CPSAS members commented on the increase in abundance of anchovy reported by fishermen in near-shore waters in both southern and central California. This abundance contradicts available data, primarily egg and larval surveys, which imply that anchovy abundance may be declining. The CPSAS points out that Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) surveys are conducted primarily offshore, and the survey vessels cannot access the near-shore waters around kelp beds and in estuaries, where anchovies are now observed in large number.

The CPSAS discussed the public comment calling for a reduction in harvest of the central subpopulation of northern anchovy. Even though catches have increased somewhat in recent months in Monterey, markets are limited and recent catches are still less than half of the 25,000 mt harvest limit. Further restricting the catch would essentially curtail Monterey's historic wetfish fleet. Market squid are largely unavailable now due to El Niño conditions and although the Monterey Bay is full of sardines at present, the fishery is closed for the foreseeable future.

The CPSAS is dedicated to the principal of sustainable fishing practices and the conservation of these stocks for the future. However, the CPSAS does not believe an annual catch limit (ACT) should be set until accurate data are available and are analyzed to determine an appropriate target level. The CPSAS notes that the National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Fisheries Science Center will be presenting a white paper at the November Council meeting on data available for anchovy and other CPS assessment. We recognize that the Amendment 13 settlement agreement will create a very large additional workload for scientists, the management team and the CPSAS. We foresee no immediate need that warrants changing the current schedule of priorities.

The CPSAS supports the existing precautionary harvest control rule, which by default reserves at least 75 percent of the overfishing limit (OFL) for ecosystem needs.

Regarding the CPSMT's report on CPS monitoring and management activities, the CPSAS would like to thank the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for sponsoring a workshop to discuss live bait use in California. The workshop brought together CDFW personnel, live bait haulers, Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessels skipper/owners and the general public. Topics of discussion were live bait handling practices from the time fish were caught until the ultimate consumer used them. The issues of number of scoops landed and the average weight of a scoop were discussed in detail. There was consensus among bait haulers

that the best time to estimate catch is when fish are placed in receivers, not when placed aboard the vessel. When fish are moved to receivers they either are scooped from the boat or crowded into a flume, which empties into the receiver. Either method allows for a more accurate estimate as you can either count the scoops or determine the number when the receiver is full (receivers hold between 30-40 scoops depending on box size). The live bait fleet agreed to place greater emphasis on filling out their voluntary catch log as accurately as possible including the species composition of mixed catches. Members of the commercial passenger fishing vessel fleet pointed out that approximately 75 percent of the fish used as live bait is returned to the water alive in the form of chum. As a result of this workshop, improved live bait reporting should provide the Council with a more accurate estimate of coastal pelagic species use.

PFMC
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