

Decision Summary Document
Pacific Fishery Management Council
June 12-16, 2015

Council Meeting Decision Summary Documents are highlights of significant 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](#).

Habitat

Current Habitat Issues

The Council directed the Habitat Committee to develop a draft letter on the Oregon State University wave energy test site (PMEC-SETS) for the September Council Meeting advance briefing book, and directed staff to send a somewhat modified version of the proposed letter on Humboldt Bay aquaculture ([Agenda Item C.1, Attachment 1](#)), reflecting several points made during the Council floor discussion.

Groundfish Management

Permit Stacking Cost Recovery Report

The Council received and accepted a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) report ([Agenda Item D.2.a, NMFS Report](#)) indicating that, at present, the governmental costs for the limited entry fixed gear permit stacking sector are not sufficient to warrant the implementation of a cost recovery program for that sector.

Salmon Endangered Species Act (ESA) Consultation Re-initiation Update

The Council endorsed NMFS' proposal to convene a workshop in mid-August in order to brief stakeholders on the development of the biological opinion for ESA-listed Chinook salmon stocks caught in the Pacific coast groundfish fishery, and to obtain input from stakeholders on realistic estimates by catch in existing and future groundfish fisheries and potential measures to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch. NMFS will report on workshop outcomes at the September Council meeting. This information will help the Council to develop proposed incidental catch levels for various groundfish fisheries to be evaluated through the reinitiated NMFS ESA section 7 consultation with regard to their jeopardizing listed salmon stocks' existence.

Non-Salmon ESA Report

The Council took the following action in response to recommendations of the Groundfish ESA Workgroup:

- Requested that United States Fish and Wildlife Service reinstate ESA section 7 consultation for eulachon or modify the current Incidental Take Statement to develop a take estimate that accounts for the increase in eulachon abundance and includes the shorebased hake fishery, as well as bottom trawl and at-sea sectors.
- Requested that NMFS reinstate ESA section 7 consultation for short-tailed albatross to incorporate new information on population status and fishery takes.
- Tasked the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) with review of methods to estimate rare event bycatch in the absence of 100 percent observer coverage.
- Began the process to implement a logbook requirement for all commercial groundfish fisheries, especially for those fisheries with low observer coverage rates.

The Council recognized that implementing the logbook requirement will be complicated, although electronic logbooks could provide some efficiencies. The Council will consider scheduling action on this topic at a future meeting.

Specifications Process for 2017-2018 Fisheries

The Council adopted the process and schedule as described in [Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 1](#). The Council also scheduled a further discussion at the September Council Meeting regarding a contingency plan, should the January 1 fishing year start date become threatened as in prior years, and adding additional elements to the process and schedule regarding a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendment to better address within-biennium implementation of rebuilt stock implications (a “green light” mechanism).

Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat and Rockfish Conservation Area Update

The Council provided guidance on the development of alternatives to change groundfish essential fish habitat (EFH), including an update from the collaborative group of industry and nongovernmental organization participants. The collaborative group will continue outreach meetings and intends to submit a proposed alternative to modify EFH closed areas and rockfish conservation areas for the advance September briefing book.

The Council also passed a motion recognizing that any EFH changes affecting Tribal usual and accustomed areas would be subject to government consultation between NMFS and the affected tribe or tribes.

Inseason Adjustments

The Council adopted a revised skate discard mortality rate recommended by the SSC. Additionally, the Council considered the latest information on groundfish landings and adopted increases to the big skate trip limits for the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota Program. Trip limit increases were also adopted for the fixed gear fleets including the limited entry and open access sablefish daily trip limit fisheries north of 36° N. latitude; open access fishery for minor

shelf Rockfish complex, shortbelly, widow, and chilipepper between 40° 10' and 34° 27' N. latitude; limited entry and open access blackgill rockfish south of 40° 10' N. latitude; and limited entry and open access fisheries for California scorpionfish. Reductions to the limited entry and open access fixed gear black rockfish trip limits were adopted between 40° 10' and 42° N. latitude. The specific recommendations, including the recommended implementation dates, can be found here <http://tinyurl.com/pg3mz4s>.

Final Stock Assessments and Catch Reports

The Council adopted new full assessments for canary rockfish and darkblotched rockfish; new update assessments for chilipepper rockfish, petrale sole, and sablefish; and new catch reports for cowcod, Pacific ocean perch, and yelloweye rockfish as recommended by the SSC in [Agenda Item D.8.a, Supplemental SSC Report](#). The new assessments for canary rockfish and petrale sole indicate both stocks are now rebuilt in advance of the target year specified in their respective rebuilding plans. These new assessments and catch reports will be integrated into the biennial specifications for 2017-2018 and beyond.

Blackgill and Slope Rockfish Quota Share Allocation

The Council decided to drop alternatives for the reallocation of limited entry trawl quota shares in association with removing blackgill rockfish from the Slope Rockfish complex south of 40° 10' N. latitude. If the Council decides to go forward with this proposed action, quota share allocations of blackgill rockfish and the remaining species in the southern Slope Rockfish complex will be established using the default Amendment 20 rules that apply to such a situation. Additionally, as part of the action in September, the Council will consider whether adjustments to the vessel usage caps would be appropriate if the stock complex is restructured. The carryover of quota pounds from the year before the restructuring to the year after will also be addressed.

Rebuilding Revision Rules

The Council received a briefing from Ms. Chantel Wetzel on a new management strategy evaluation (MSE) which analyzes the long-term trade-offs associated with different strategies for revising existing rebuilding plans. The Council provided guidance to add alternatives and new performance metrics to the MSE as recommended by the SSC ([Agenda Item D.10.a, Supplemental SSC Report](#)) and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel ([Agenda Item D.10. a, Supplemental GAP Report](#)). The Council concluded the MSE potentially provides useful information to inform future decisions on revising rebuilding plans and expressed interest in further development of this analytical tool. The Council removed next consideration on this matter from the September Council meeting agenda, when they will review a next step tentatively scheduled for November 2015.

Highly Migratory Species Management

International Issues including Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Meeting and North Pacific Albacore Management Strategy Evaluation

With respect to Pacific bluefin tuna, the Council recommended NMFS gather more data on the occurrence of adult fish in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) to help determine whether a separate spawning population occurs in this region.

With respect to bigeye tuna, the Council intends to work with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) to develop an equitable allocation of the current EPO 500 mt catch limit between Hawaii and west coast longline vessels larger than 24 meters.

With respect to the MSE for North Pacific albacore tuna to be conducted by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean, the Council will provide recommendations to the U.S. delegation to the next Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Northern Committee meeting.

Final Approval of Resubmitted Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Application

The Council recommended that NMFS issue an EFP to the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries based on their application (see [Agenda Item E.2, Attachment 1, June 2015](#)). The Council recommended 11 points of changes and adjustments to the proposed activities and additional conditions, consolidated into the 6 points below.

1. No more than two large mesh drift gillnet vessels could fish under the EFP.
2. 100 percent observer coverage.
3. One leatherback sea turtle mortality or injury as determined by the onboard observer would terminate the EFP. Similar caps would be applied to other protected species and striped marlin.
4. Fishing is prohibited in leatherback sea turtle critical habitat and other restrictions on the area of operation.
5. The EFP applicants will consult with scientists about current ocean climate conditions that are thought to be favorable for identification of optimal time/area locations to conduct test fishery operations. This would involve the use of near-real-time oceanographic data to predict general times and areas where target catch rates are expected to be high relative to bycatch rates, especially of protected species.
6. The EFP applicants will collect data on catch and bycatch, gear deployment, and ocean conditions.

Swordfish Management and Monitoring Plan Hardcaps

The Council adopted additional alternatives and directed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to analyze them for Council final action in September 2015.

These alternatives would be variations on the current hard cap alternatives 4 and 5, where a two-year average of takes of high priority protected species would be counted against the hard caps in those alternatives. The two-year period for counting takes against the caps would be aligned with the two-year biennial management period, or would be a rolling period where takes in the current fishing season and the previous fishing season would be counted against the caps.

The Council also directed the HMSMT to further develop the Swordfish Fishery Management and Monitoring Plan and to continue investigating optimal levels of observer coverage to detect rare event bycatch while considering the costs of observer coverage. The Council also expressed interest in obtaining more detail on alternatives that include performance standards for finfish bycatch.

Coastal Pelagic Species Management

Pacific Mackerel Assessment and Management Measures

The Council adopted the stock assessment, overfishing limit (OFL), and annual specifications for both the 2015-16 and the 2016-17 fishing years. The Council also adopted the following management measures: for each separate fishing year, should the directed fishery realize the annual catch target (ACT), the Council should recommend that NMFS close the directed fishery and shift to an incidental-catch-only fishery for the remainder of the fishing season, with a 45 percent incidental landing allowance when Pacific mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species (CPS), with the exception that up to 3 mt of Pacific mackerel per landing could be landed in non-CPS fisheries.

Table title, e.g. Results of stock assessment and harvest specifications for Pacific mackerel.

	2015-16 (mt)	2016-17 (mt)
Biomass	120,435	118,968
OFL	25,291	24,983
ABC_{0.45}	23,104	22,822
ACL	23,104	22,822
HG	21,469	21,161
Incidental	1,000	1,000
ACT	20,469	20,161

Litigation Settlement Discussion

The Council provided positive guidance on the draft Terms of Reference for the Pacific sardine distribution workshop, including proposed dates (August 17-19, with a 1 p.m. start on day 1, and noon finish on day 3), the location to be at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, California, and the purpose and goals of the workshop. The Council delegated to Council staff the completion of the list of formally invited participants to this workshop, which will be open to attendance by any interested person

Administrative Matters

Legislative Matters

The Council directed staff to send a letter regarding the West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act ([Agenda Item F.1.a, Supplemental Legislative Committee Report](#)) and another on the Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Prevention Act ([Agenda Item F.1, Supplemental Attachment 11](#)) in response to Congressional requests for review and comment on this legislation. The letter on the Crab Management Act will include emphasis on the existing Tri-State Crab Committee's successful and cooperative management. In addition, the Council authorized staff to send a letter on the Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act (S 1334) if a request is received from the Senate, containing similar information as in the Council's March 24 letter to the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Natural Resources on HR 774.

Fiscal Matters

The Council adopted a CY 2015 operating budget of \$4,914,237 as presented in [Agenda Item F.2, Supplemental Attachment 3](#).

The Council recommended staff submit a 2015-2019 revised grant application as presented in [Agenda Item F.2, Supplemental Attachment 3](#).

Approval of Council Meeting Record

The Council adopted the meeting records for the November 2014, March 2015, and April 2015 meetings (as corrected).

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures (COP)

The Council elected Ms. Dorothy Lowman Chair and Mr. Herb Pollard Vice Chair of the Pacific Fishery Management Council for the 2015-2016 term.

The Council appointed Mr. David Crabbe to represent the Council on the Pacific Offshore Cetacean Take Reduction Team.

The Council modified COP 3 by removing one of the NMFS West Coast Region seats on the Groundfish Endangered Species Work Group

The Council modified its Statement of Operating Practices and Procedures and COP 8 to accommodate formation and conduct of Council sponsored workshops.

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for September 2015 in Sacramento, California. A single-page draft proposed agenda summary will be available on the Council website in the near future, and a draft detailed proposed agenda will be available on or around August 27.

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