



# THE LINE.

**A PUBLICATION OF THE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**Volume 4, No. 2 | July 2015 | [www.pcouncil.org](http://www.pcouncil.org)**  
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*The Line is a summary of West Coast fisheries news published four or five times per year. This issue reports on decisions made at the June 2015 Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting. The Council 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 other notices, go to [tinyurl.com/3s5edce](http://tinyurl.com/3s5edce).*

## Highly Migratory Species.

**Exempted Fishing Permit Application:** The Council recommended that NMFS issue an exempted fishing permit to the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries based on their application. The exempted fishing permit would allow the use of drift gillnet gear in the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area, an area from Monterey north which is closed seasonally to protect foraging leatherback sea turtles. The Council recommended several changes; for example no more than two large mesh drift gillnet vessels may fish under the exempted fishing permit, and they must have 100% observer coverage. One leatherback sea turtle mortality or injury, as determined by the observer, would terminate the fishery. Similar caps would be applied to other protected species and striped marlin. Fishing will be prohibited in leatherback sea turtle critical habitat and other areas. In addition to these requirements, the applicants will be required to consult with scientists in order to identify the best ocean conditions and areas to conduct the test fishery.

**Swordfish Management and Monitoring Plan Hardcaps:** The Council is considering "hard caps" for high priority protected species that are occasionally taken in the California drift gillnet fishery for swordfish. If the number of encounters with any one of the identified protected species reach the hard cap, the fishery would close for the remainder of that fishing season.

## Groundfish.

**Canary and Petrale Rebuilt:** Canary rockfish and petrale sole are now rebuilt after having previously been listed as "overfished." This means more fishing opportunity in areas where those stocks are caught. For more, see <http://tinyurl.com/omab2cg>.

**Inseason Adjustments:** The Council adopted a revised big skate discard mortality rate caught by trawl gears, increased big skate trip limits for the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota Program, and adopted a revised skate discard mortality rate. The Council also adopted trip limit increases 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. The Council reduced limited entry and open access fixed gear black rockfish trip limits between 40° 10' and 42° N. latitude. The specific recommendations and dates can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/pg3mz4s>.

**Salmon bycatch:** A workshop will be held in mid-August to brief stakeholders on the progress of National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS's) biological opinion for Endangered Species Act-listed Chinook salmon caught in the groundfish fishery, and to get input on ways to reduce Chinook bycatch. This will help the Council develop incidental catch levels for various groundfish fisheries.

**2017-2018 Fisheries:** In September, the Council will discuss a contingency plan in case the January 1 fishing year start date is delayed, as it has been in the past. The Council will also discuss allowing mid-biennium changes to annual catch limits if species are declared rebuilt. In September, the Council will adopt a preliminary range of new management measures for analysis.

**Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat:** The Council is considering changes to groundfish essential fish habitat, including a proposal by a collaborative group of fishermen and nongovernmental organization staff. This group is conducting outreach meetings and plans to submit a proposal to change EFH closed areas and rockfish conservation areas for the September briefing book.

## Administrative Matters.

The Council elected **Ms. Dorothy Lowman** Chair and **Mr. Herb Pollard** Vice Chair of the Pacific Fishery Management Council for the 2015-2016 term. In addition, the Secretary of Commerce reappointed **Mr. David Crabbe**, **Mr. Buzz Brizendine**, and **Ms. Dorothy Lowman** to the California and Oregon obligatory seats, respectively, on the Council; appointed **Mr. Joseph Y. Oatman**, of the Nez Perce Tribe, to the Tribal seat, replacing **Mr. David Sones**; and appointed **Mr. Phil Anderson** to the Washington obligatory seat, replacing **Mr. Dale Myer**.

## Next Council Meeting.

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for September 2015 in Sacramento, California. A single page draft proposed agenda summary is available on the Council website and a draft detailed proposed agenda will be available by August 27.