

SPECIFICATIONS PROCESS FOR 2017-2018 MANAGEMENT

In June, the Council adopted a process and schedule for deciding harvest specifications and management measures for 2017-2018 groundfish fisheries (see [Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 1, June 2015](#)). Based on this schedule, the Council will begin deciding groundfish harvest specifications and providing input on new management measures for 2017-2018 groundfish fisheries at this meeting. Specifically, the Council is tasked with adopting overfishing limits (OFLs), a range of acceptable biological catches (ABCs), and a preliminary range of annual catch limits (ACLs) to be further analyzed if there is a desire to depart from default harvest control rules (HCRs); and a preliminary range of new management measures for 2017-2018 fisheries. Additionally, the Council is scheduled to reconsider the ecosystem component (EC) designation for big skate and/or embark on a broader consideration for all skates (e.g., explore a new Skate complex).

Harvest Specifications

Amendment 24 established default HCRs that are applied to the best available scientific information to determine the 2017 and 2018 OFLs, ABCs, and ACLs. No action is needed if the Council intends to implement the remaining harvest specifications based on the default HCRs described in Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 1. In the event the Council would like to change the default HCR, the Council should adopt a preliminary range of ABCs based on their P* choice and any additional ACL HCRs for more detailed analysis under this agenda item before deciding on a final range of ACLs in November. Selection of preliminary preferred ACLs is scheduled for November 2015 and final preferred ACLs in April 2016, for those stocks where the Council departs from the HCR.

Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 1 contains the proposed 2017 and 2018 OFLs, a range of 2017 and 2018 ABCs based on the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC's) estimated sigmas for each stock category and overfishing probabilities (P*s), ACLs that comport with the Council's default HCRs, and a description of the HCR. The SSC will review the proposed OFLs, stock categories, and sigma values, and make their recommendations to the Council. The Council should review and adopt the OFL values recommended by the SSC and adopt a range of HCRs to analyze for those stocks the Council is contemplating a departure from current HCRs.

Ecosystem Component Species

The Council is scheduled to reconsider the EC designation for big skate or embark on a broader consideration for all skates (e.g., explore a new Skate complex). Information provided at the April and June 2015 Council meetings indicated that big skate are retained for sale and that recent catches may have approached previously estimated harvest specifications (see information provided under [Agenda Item E.8, April 2015](#) and [Agenda Item D.7, June 2015](#)). As such, the Council is scheduled to reconsider the EC designation for big skates or embark on a broader consideration for all skates for 2017-2018 fisheries. The Council needs to adopt a range of alternatives for managing skates at this meeting. A draft range of alternatives for Council consideration can be found in Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 2.

The schedule adopted by the Council at the June Council meeting calls for selection of a preliminary preferred alternative for managing skates in September 2015 and a final preferred alternative in November 2015. This schedule is intended to provide sufficient time for the Groundfish Management Team to design and analyze any necessary management measures over the winter, allowing the Council to adopt preliminary preferred management measures in April 2016 and final management measures in June 2016, consistent with the schedule adopted in June 2015.

Preliminary Range of New Management Measures

Under Agenda Item H.5, the Council is also scheduled to provide initial fishery management guidance, including adopting a preliminary range of new management measures necessary to keep catch within or attain a specification, or to address a habitat or protected resources concern for analysis. New measures are those where the impacts have not been previously analyzed and/or have not been previously implemented in regulation. At the November 2015 meeting, initial considerations and preliminary analysis for new management measures will be brought forward which will allow the Council to further refine the range of new management measures for more detailed analysis. At the November 2015 meeting, the Council is also scheduled to provide guidance on adjustments to routine measures, including two-year allocations, to be analyzed over winter. Selection of the preliminary preferred management measures is scheduled to occur at the April 2016 Council meeting, and final action is scheduled for June 2016.

In June 2015, the Council requested that the initial management measure scoping process include consideration of a Fishery Management Plan amendment to allow a mid-biennium change to the harvest specifications in the event a stock assessment indicates a rebuilt status (a “green light” mechanism). Management entities, advisory bodies, and the public are expected to bring forward other ideas for Council consideration under Agenda Item H.5.

The Council should carefully consider the list of potential new management measures when deciding which issues are the highest priorities for more detailed analyses. Establishing a manageable range of alternatives for analysis will increase the likelihood that harvest specifications are implemented January 1, consistent with the Fishery Management Plan. The Council will reconsider those measures deemed ineligible for consideration in the biennial process at the June 2016 meeting during the omnibus prioritization process.

Review a Contingency Plan

At the June 2015 meeting, the Council requested additional information regarding the workload and process associated with a post-January 1 implementation date. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provided a report in response to that request for Council consideration (Agenda Item H.5.a, NMFS Report).

Council Action:

1. **Adopt those 2017-2018 OFLs, stock categories, and sigma values recommended by the SSC.**
2. **In the event the Council chooses to depart from the default HCR, adopt a preliminary range of 2017-2018 P*s/ABCs and ACLs for more detailed analysis.**
3. **Reconsider the EC designation for big skates or embark upon a broader consideration for all skates. Adopt a range of alternatives and select a preliminary preferred alternative.**
4. **Adopt a preliminary range of new management measures.**
5. **Consider the NMFS Report regarding the process and workload associated with a post-January 1, 2017 implementation date.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 1: 2017 and 2018 Groundfish Harvest Specifications.
2. Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 2: Draft Range of Alternatives for Managing West Coast Skate Species.
3. Agenda Item H.5.a, NMFS Report: Specifications Process for 2017-2018 Management.
4. Agenda Item H.5.b, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- H.5. Specifications Process for 2017-2018 Management John DeVore, Kelly Ames
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Overfishing Limits and Preliminary P*/Acceptable Biological Catches, a Range of Alternatives and a Preliminary Preferred Alternative for Managing Skates, a Preliminary Range of New Management Measures, and Review a Contingency Schedule

PFMC
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