



THE LINE.

A PUBLICATION OF THE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
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866-806-7204 | pfmc.comments@noaa.gov

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 November 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.

GROUND FISH.

Inseason adjustments: Big skate trip limits for 2016 were set at 5,000 pounds/2 months for Period 1, 25,000 pounds/2 months for Period 2, 30,000 pounds/2 months for Period 3, 35,000 pounds/2 months for Period 4, 10,000 pounds/2 months for Period 5, and 5,000 pounds/2 months for Period 6. **Black rockfish:** The Council adopted new full assessments black rockfish off California, Oregon, and Washington. The stocks are near or above target levels. **Harvest specifications:** The Council adopted final overfishing limits and other management levels for 2017 and 2018 fisheries. All remaining 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications will be adopted in April 2016 in Vancouver, WA. **Whiting electronic monitoring:** The Council discussed electronic monitoring for the whiting fishery. Logbooks will be required, with video recordings used to audit their accuracy; 100 percent auditing will be required for now. A third-party provider will be required to conduct video reviews, and the industry will be responsible for paying for the review. In April, the Council will verify or change their final preferred alternative for the IFQ fixed-gear fishery electronic monitoring program, and will review draft regulations for whiting and IFQ fixed-gear electronic monitoring programs. **Vessel movement monitoring:** The Council discussed ways to monitor moving vessels; see <http://tinyurl.com/zd2l2nm>. **Test fisheries:** The Council approved a Nature Conservancy exempted fishing permit (or test fishery) for the 2017-18 management cycle. **Trawl catch shares:** A meeting will be held in February 2016 to discuss the current state of the trawl fishery and explore needed improvements (<http://tinyurl.com/lz2omt2>).

SALMON.

A tentative 2016 salmon management schedule (<http://tinyurl.com/ou5zgua>) was set. Hearings will be held in Westport, WA and Coos Bay, OR on March 28 and Fort Bragg, CA on March 29. An industry-sponsored test fishery in the California Klamath Management Zone has been proposed; proponents were asked to coordinate with the National Marine Fisheries Service and provide a revised proposal in March 2016.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES.

The Council is issuing an exempted fishing permit (EFP) to test the use of modified large-mesh drift gillnet gear for fishing by two boats in the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area. Fishing will be conducted when and where bycatch is likely to be low and swordfish abundance high. The EFP will test whether “eco-set triggered fishing” can result in less bycatch and higher

swordfish catch. If successful, this may lead to further testing with more vessels, and drift gillnet vessels may be allowed to access all (or portions of) the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area when swordfish catch rates are high and bycatch is low. Any such fishery would operate under strict bycatch limits. The Council is interested in testing various configurations of pelagic longline gear as another alternative to the existing drift gillnet fishery, and would like to manage all gear types in the swordfish fishery under Federal (rather than state) permits.

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT.

The Council expressed concern about the anchovy population, which has not been assessed in about 20 years. National Marine Fisheries Service plans to conduct an anchovy stock assessment by late 2016, and the Council will be considering a different management approach for anchovies, also in late 2016.

HALIBUT.

In Washington, the halibut season opening date in the North Coast Subarea was changed to the first Saturday in May, with Thursday & Saturday openings during the second week in May, and a closure during the third week in May. The Central Oregon Coast Subarea nearshore season will be seven days a week June 1-October 31, or until the allocation is attained. In California, the same approach used in 2015 to establish the recreational season and inseason management will be used in 2016. For details, see <http://tinyurl.com/ojc7nd3>.

HABITAT.

The Council sent a letter to the Humboldt Bay Harbor District voicing concerns regarding the expansion of the Coast Seafoods aquaculture operation in Humboldt Bay (<http://tinyurl.com/ja7p6oa>).

OTHER BUSINESS.

At Congressional request, the Council sent a letter to Congress voicing concerns regarding California drought legislation (<http://tinyurl.com/ja5wrw8>). The Council also made appointments to its advisory bodies (<http://tinyurl.com/jgp22v6>). **Next meeting:** The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for March 8-14, 2016 in Sacramento, California. A draft agenda will be available on the Council website in early December.