



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/R8/VFWO

November 12, 2015

Dorothy Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, #101
Portland, Oregon 97220

Subject: Agenda Item H.3–Anchovy General Status Overview

Dear Ms. Lowman and Council Members:

We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are submitting this report as a follow-up to an earlier report we submitted to the Council for its June 2015 meeting under Agenda Item G.3–Anchovy Update. In that report we shared information with the Council regarding California brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*) mortality events and breeding failures in recent years and expressed our concern regarding the continued availability of northern anchovy (*Engraulis mordax*) for California brown pelicans and other marine predators in the California Current Ecosystem.

We are pleased that the Council has solicited and received information on the status of northern anchovy and will consider whether to approve a review of proposed alternate methodologies for assessing Coastal Pelagic Species stocks. However, we are concerned about continuing indications that the central subpopulation may be much smaller than it was when the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) was adopted. Of particular concern is the low northern anchovy biomass off southern California, as indicated by aerial surveys documented in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife report (Agenda Item H.4.a), including the summer 2015 aerial survey, during which there were no detections of northern anchovy. MacCall et al. (in press) estimate the northern anchovy biomass off southern California at less than 20,000 metric tons (MT) (confidence interval (CI) < 100,000 MT).¹ While northern anchovy fishing effort in southern California has been negligible, preliminary statewide landings had reached 13,508 MT as of October 15, 2015.² Under the current ACL of 25,000 MT, continued fishing pressure may affect the ability of the central subpopulation to support dependent predators such as brown pelicans or

¹ MacCall, A.D., W.J. Sydeman, P.C. Davison. J.A. Thayer. In press. Non-Fishery Collapse of Northern Anchovy off California. Fisheries Research.

² California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2015. Coastal Pelagic Species–Highly Migratory Species Project. October 15.

compromise the resilience of the stock itself. We therefore urge the Council to consider adopting interim measures regarding the harvest of the central subpopulation of northern anchovy while a full stock assessment is underway.

We thank the Council for its commitment to ecosystem-based management of fisheries. If you have questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact Lilian Carswell, of my staff, at (805) 612-2793 or Lilian_Carswell@fws.gov.

Sincerely,


acting Stephen P. Henry
Field Supervisor

Relevant Literature

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