

Decision Summary Document Pacific Fishery Management Council

March 9-14, 2016

Council Meeting Decision Summary Documents are highlights of significant decisions made at Council meetings. Results of agenda items that do not reach a level of highlight significance are typically not described in the Decision Summary Document. 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 draft a letter to the Bureau of Reclamation containing 2016 freshwater habitat management recommendations for Sacramento winter-run Chinook salmon, and include it in the April briefing book, as recommended by the Habitat Committee. The Council intends to take action on the draft letter at the April Council Meeting in Vancouver, Washington.

Ecosystem Management

California Current Ecosystem Report Including Integrated Ecosystem Assessment

The Council thanked the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Team for an excellent 2016 Annual Report, observing that the report contained valuable information, particularly related to current anomalous ocean conditions that the Council will take into account in 2016 fishery management decision-making. The Council also endorsed recommendations from advisory body reports about improving next year's report, including more indicators informing the status of recreational fisheries and a section on research recommendations.

Update on Coordinated Ecosystem Indicator Review Initiative

The Council reviewed progress to date and provided guidance on the schedule and timeline for the Initiative to refine and improve the ecosystem indicators presented in the Annual State of the California Current Ecosystem Report. The Council plans to finalize ecosystem indicators at its September 2016 meeting. Council advisory bodies were tasked with evaluating specific ecosystem indicators relevant to the four Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). Advisory bodies, particularly the Ecosystem Work Group, were also tasked with providing analyses about how ecosystem effects across the FMPs could be addressed in Council actions.

Over the long term, integrating ecosystem information into Council decisions could be facilitated by identifying focal topics that would be taken up in future years. The Council suggested that indicators relevant to setting annual management measures for the ocean salmon fishery would be a useful focal area. A second focal area would be to incorporate ecosystem considerations

into the harvest management framework for sablefish. This recommendation comes in light of the fact that sablefish stock biomass has declined despite precautionary management measures.

Salmon Management

Chinook Fishery Regulation Assessment Model (FRAM) Co-manager Update

The Co-managers informed the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) that, while substantial progress has been made, work remains to be done prior to completion and implementation of the new model base period. It is not expected that the remaining work on the new base period will be completed in time for use in 2016, and work is anticipated to continue for potential application of the new base period for use in 2017 fishery management.

Adoption of 2016 Management Alternatives for Public Review

The Council adopted three Alternative sets of management measures for the 2016 ocean commercial, recreational, and tribal salmon fisheries. The detailed alternatives can be found on the Council web page at: <https://www.p council.org/documents/2016/03/march-2016-meeting-record.pdf/>.

Public hearings on the Alternatives have been scheduled in Westport, WA and Coos Bay, OR for March 28, and Fort Bragg, California for March 29. The Council is scheduled to adopt final 2016 ocean salmon regulations at its April 8-14, 2016 meeting in Vancouver, WA.

Sacramento River Winter Chinook Control Rule Update

The newly-formed Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup reported its plans to develop indicators to better predict age-3 ocean abundance in the upcoming fishing year and methods for evaluating the relative risks and benefits of alternative control rules. The Workgroup is tentatively scheduled to meet June 15-16, 2016 at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in Santa Cruz, CA to review progress and to prepare a report for the Council's June meeting in Tacoma, WA.

Highly Migratory Species Management

Report on Ongoing Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP)

The Council recommended reissuance of the Perguson and Pflegler Institute of Environmental Research (PIER) EFPs for 2017-2018. The Council also requested NMFS keep the Council informed on future Letters of Acknowledgement (LOA) issued for marine research activities that have direct implications to West Coast fishery management.

Deep-Set Buoy Gear Amendment Scoping

The Council directed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to begin developing ranges of alternatives for various aspects related to authorizing a deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) fishery. Development of program elements would occur concurrently with ongoing DSBG EFPs, which are likely to provide additional information relevant to authorizing the fishery. Ranges of alternatives would cover definitions for the gear and the requirement for gear to be

actively tended, the geographic area where the fishery would be allowed to operate, identify target species and species that could not be retained or landed (prohibited species) other than those already in the HMS Fishery Management Plan, a licensing regime, and other elements identified in advisory body reports. The Council plans to review and potentially adopt a range of alternatives at its September 2016 meeting.

Recommendations for International Management Activities Including U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty Area Fishery Update

The Council discussed three topic areas of international HMS management.

North Pacific Albacore Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE): The Council endorsed the HMSMT and HMS Advisory Subpanel proposal to schedule a webinar in advance of the May 24-25 MSE workshop to provide guidance to Council representatives to the workshop.

U.S./Canada Albacore Treaty: The current fishing regime under the Treaty expires at the end of the 2016 fishing season. The Council thanked the State Department for its intent to convene a U.S. delegation meeting in the near future to review all current relevant data produced by both the Joint Data Working Group and independent NMFS analysis, and urged the State Department to convene a similar meeting in the Fall to review information collected on the 2016 fishing season, diplomatic notes exchanged during the current fishing regime, and any relevant information from international efforts. The Council scheduled consideration of possible recommendations on a future fishing regime (or lack thereof) at its November 2016 meeting.

90th Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission: The Council did not make any specific recommendations for U.S. positions at the meeting, which overlaps the June Council meeting.

Groundfish Management

Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) for California Mid-Water Commercial Jig Gear for 2017-2018

The Council forwarded the 2017-2018 commercial jig fishing EFP application for public review and possible final adoption at its June 2016 meeting with the following modifications: (1) include monitoring options of (a) 30 percent observer coverage, (b) 100 percent observer coverage; and (c) 30 percent observer coverage augmented by Electronic Monitoring (specific monitoring option to be specified at the time of final Council action); (2) extend the southern boundary for the EFP to Point Conception; (3) add up to three additional vessels to the EFP. The Council adopted set-asides as specified in 2015-16 and reduced the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife research set aside for yelloweye by the amount needed for this EFP (0.03 mt).

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments, Including Carryover

The Council adopted landing limits for the limited entry sablefish daily trip limit fishery north of 36° N. latitude of 1,125 pounds per week and 3,375 pounds per bimonthly period. This change would be more efficient for vessels, as three full weekly limits would equate to one bimonthly

trip limit (i.e. 1,125 lbs x 3 weeks = 3,375 lbs), and would help ensure that the fishery, which saw increased effort last year, remains within its landing target.

The Council recommended that NMFS issue surplus carryover for all non-whiting individual fishing quota species where the annual catch limit (ACL) is less than the acceptable biological catch (ABC), including sablefish north of 36° N. latitude and canary rockfish. Surplus carryover for petrale sole is not eligible under the current NMFS policy given that the ACL is equal to the ABC. The Council recommended NMFS issue eligible carryover pounds up to the point where the ACL plus surplus carryover equals the ABC.

Oregon Mid-Water Sport Fishery Regulations Final Action

The Council adopted Alternative 1, where midwater long-leader recreational groundfish fishing would be authorized seaward of a line approximating the 40 fm depth curve exclusively off the coast of Oregon from April-September to target abundant and healthy midwater species while avoiding or minimizing interactions with overfished rockfish species. The adopted gear configuration includes no more than one line with three hooks, a minimum of 30 feet between the sinker and the lowest hook, and a non-compressible float required above the hooks. Small plastic worms and flies are allowed along with weighted hooks; bait and large lures would be prohibited. Further, lingcod retention is prohibited. All other existing state and Federal groundfish regulations, such as bag limits, rockfish conservation areas, etc., would remain in effect. This alternative would be monitored with the existing Oregon Recreational Boat Survey program. At the April Council meeting, NMFS will provide an update on the timeline for implementation.

Salmon Endangered Species Act (ESA) Consultation Update

The Council clarified and reaffirmed the specifications of its September 2016 motion describing the range of alternatives to be evaluated, tasked the staff with assuring comprehensive recommendations from the Salmon Advisory Subpanel and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel for Council consideration at the September 2016 Council meeting, and reaffirmed the schedule calling for adoption of a preliminary preferred alternative at the September 2016 Council meeting and a final preferred alternative at the November 2016 Council meeting.

Electronic Monitoring Exempted Fishing Permit Update and Revisions

The Council recommended that NMFS extend the expiration date of all electronic monitoring EFPs for the bottom trawl, non-whiting mid-water trawl, whiting mid-water trawl, and fixed gear catch share fisheries through 2018. However, the Council clarified their intent that the EFPs cease when fleetwide regulations are implemented; fleet-wide regulations for whiting midwater trawl fisheries and fixed gear fisheries are expected January 1, 2017, but fleet-wide regulations for bottom trawl and non-whiting mid-water trawl fisheries are not expected to be implemented January 1, 2017 under current scheduling. Based on the lack of fishery information for the bottom trawl and non-whiting mid-water trawl fisheries, the Council expects that EFP for these fisheries will be needed through December 31, 2018.

The Council is scheduled to verify their final preferred alternative for the fixed gear fishery, and deem the electronic monitoring regulations for fixed gear and the whiting mid-water trawl fisheries at its April 2016 meeting in Vancouver, WA.

Changes to Trawl Catch Share Program Gear Regulations - Final Action

The Council selected the final preferred alternatives recommended in the GAP report ([Agenda Item G.8.a, Supplemental GAP Report](#)) except with respect to the use of multiple gears on a trip (Issue F) and fishing in multiple individual fishing quota management areas (Issue G). For Issue F, the Council adopted the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel recommendation to allow vessels to carry and use multiple types of trawl gear on the same trip but recommended that the vessels be required to separate catch by gear type and that landings be recorded on separate electronic fish tickets by gear type (Sorting Suboption A). For Issue G, the Council did not select a final preferred alternative, but scheduled the issue for final consideration at the June 2016 meeting.

Pacific Halibut Management

Incidental Catch Recommendation Options for the Salmon Troll and Final Recommendations for Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries

The Council recommended that the current incidental Pacific halibut catch regulations for the non-Indian salmon troll fishery remain unchanged for the period April 1-30, 2016. The current limit is no more than one halibut per four Chinook, except one halibut may be possessed or landed without meeting the ratio requirement and no more than 12 halibut may be landed per trip. The Council also adopted the following options for public review.

Alternative 1 (Status Quo): May 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016 and April 1-30, 2017, license-holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per each four Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 12 halibut landed per trip.

Alternative 2: May 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016 and April 1-30, 2017, license-holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per each three Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 15 halibut landed per trip.

Alternative 3: May 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016 and April 1-30, 2017, license-holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per each three Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 20 halibut landed per trip.

Final Council action is scheduled on the aforementioned limits at the April Council meeting.

The Council also recommended the fixed gear tier fishery north of Point Chehalis be set at two fish plus 110 pounds of halibut per 1,000 pounds dressed weight of sablefish.

Halibut Incidental Groundfish Regulations Final Action

The Council recommended that NMFS have the automatic action authority to close retention of Pacific halibut in the limited entry fixed gear sablefish primary fishery upon posting of notice by the International Pacific Halibut Commission on its website that the Pacific halibut quota for this fishery has been reached and further retention is prohibited. Closures will also be announced on the NMFS halibut hotline.

Administrative Matters

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

The Council made the following appointments to advisory bodies:

Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel

California seat - Dr. Don Maruska

Groundfish Management Team

West Coast Region seat - Ms. Karen Palmigiano

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife seat - Mr. Patrick Mirick

Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team

Northwest Fisheries Science Center seat - Dr. Kym Jacobson

Habitat Committee

Idaho Fish and Game seat - Mr. Lance Hebdon

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife seat - Ms. Randi Thurston

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for April 8-14, 2016 in Vancouver, Washington. See the detailed proposed [April 2016 agenda and meeting notice](#) for further details.

PFMC

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