

Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative
Amendment 20 Catcher/Processor Cooperative
Final Annual Report 2015

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National Marine Fisheries Service
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Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative Final Annual Report for 2015

Introduction

In 1997, the owners of the catcher/processor (C/P) vessels operating in the Pacific whiting fishery formed a fishing cooperative to coordinate harvesting efforts. This research and harvesting cooperative is the Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative (PWCC). A private contract dictates the activities of the PWCC and a harvest agreement facilitates efficient management and accurate accounting of harvest by the PWCC and PWCC member companies.

In 2011, rationalization of the US Pacific coast groundfish trawl fishery was implemented via Amendments 20 and 21 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) summarized the significant effects of Amendment 20 on the shoreside groundfish trawl and mothership whiting fisheries, as well as the effect on the C/P fishery in the September 2, 2011 proposed rule for the Program Improvement and Enhancement (PIE) Rule:

“In January 2011, NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council set up a new management program called the trawl rationalization program. This program significantly changes how two of these groups work. Shore trawlers now fish under their own set of individual species quotas by vessel.... [T]he mothership fishery works as a coop where catcher-vessels and motherships work together collectively. The catcher-processor fleet continues as a single coop.”

Trawl rationalization regulations require a final report of the prior year's fishery be submitted to NMFS in March the following year.

Purpose of Report

This report is intended to disclose all information required or identified in Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 660.113(d)(3). The table in this report is largely self-explanatory. The catch data in this report was provided by Sea State, Inc. and was obtained from the NMFS – At-Sea Hake Observer Program. Prior to trawl rationalization, NMFS provided a similar report, but with catch information at the sector level (rather than individual vessel information). Catch information at the C/P-vessel level was and is known by NMFS. Therefore, production of this more detailed report by the PWCC should reduce NMFS workload and cost burden.

Reporting Requirements

Federal regulations (50CFR660.113(d)(3)) detail the report requirements:

“(3) Annual coop report The designated coop manager for the C/P coop must submit an annual report to NMFS and the Council by March 31 each year, before a coop permit is issued for that year. The annual coop report will contain information about the previous year's fishery, including:

- “(i) The C/P sector's annual allocation of Pacific whiting;
- “(ii) The C/P coop's actual retained and discarded catch of Pacific whiting, salmon, Pacific halibut, rockfish, groundfish, and other species on a vessel-by-vessel basis;
- “(iii) A description of the method used by the C/P coop to monitor performance of cooperative vessels that participated in the fishery;
- “(iv) A description of any actions taken by the C/P coop in response to any vessels that exceed their allowed catch and bycatch; and
- “(v) Plans for the current year's C/P coop fishery, including the companies participating in the cooperative, the harvest agreement, and catch monitoring and reporting requirements.”

A. C/P Sector's Annual Allocation of Pacific Whiting

In May 2015, NMFS issued the C/P cooperative permit, which was effective on May 15, 2015. As specified at 50 CFR 660.160(c), “[t]he C/P Coop Program allocation of Pacific whiting is equal to the catcher/processor sector allocation. Only a single coop may be formed in the catcher/processor sector with the one permitted coop receiving the catcher/ processor sector allocation.” For 2015, the C/P sector amounts of Pacific whiting and non-whiting groundfish species with allocations are as follows (per NMFS, Initial Administrative Determination Notice of Right to Appeal, May 13, 2015):

2015 C/P sector allocations	mt	pounds
Pacific whiting	90,673	199,897,696
Pacific ocean perch	10.2	22,487
Widow rockfish	170.0	374,785
Darkblotched rockfish	9.2	20,283
Canary rockfish	8.0	17,637

NMFS reapportioned 30,000 mt on September 21, 2015 (leaving a tribal allocation of 26,888 mt.

Based on the information presented at the September meeting, the PFMC recommended redistribution of darkblotched rockfish to the MS and CP sectors because both fisheries showed higher than anticipated bycatch rates. If those higher rates continued and no additional darkblotched rockfish was distributed, both sectors were projected to attain their current darkblotched rockfish set-asides before their Pacific whiting allocations are fully harvested. On October 29, 2015, 7 mt of darkblotched rockfish was redistributed to the MS and CP sectors equally (3.5 mt to each sector). This same amount of darkblotched rockfish (7 mt) was deducted from the incidental open access sector, because it is anticipated to go unharvested through the end of 2015.

B. C/P Cooperative’s Actual Retained and Discarded Catch of Pacific Whiting, Salmon, Pacific Halibut, Rockfish, Groundfish, and Other Species on a Vessel-by-Vessel Basis

Complete catch data for 2015 is provided in Table 1. Species are grouped per the advice of NMFS.

C. Description of the Method Used by the C/P Cooperative to Monitor Performance of Cooperative Vessels that Participated in the Fishery

Each vessel in the C/P Cooperative carries two NMFS-certified observers to monitor and account for the catch of Pacific whiting and non-whiting groundfish allocations (i.e., canary rockfish, widow rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, and Pacific ocean perch), and to monitor and account for the catch of prohibited species. Observers report each vessel's catch on a daily basis to both the NMFS Observer Program in Seattle and to Sea State, Inc. (a private, third-party catch monitoring firm).

For 2015, the C/P Cooperative contracted with Sea State, Inc. to process the catch data provided by the observer program and to provide in-season management support. Sea State regularly provides catch reports to each C/P vessel, the C/P fleet, and the C/P Cooperative. These reports may include cumulative fleet-wide and vessel-level catch data as well as tow-by-tow summaries. Fleet managers are able to reconcile the tow-by-tow catch information provided by Sea State against their own catch records to identify possible data errors and ensure accurate catch accounting throughout the fishing season. Sea State reports also provide a mechanism to identify and avoid fishing areas where incidental catch of overfished species and/or prohibited species is occurring. The C/P Cooperative has authorized Sea State, Inc. to identify specific fishing areas to be avoided as a mechanism to reduce catch of overfished species and/or prohibited species.

Catch aboard C/P vessels is weighed using flow scales and motion-compensated platform scales. The flow scale is tested daily by the vessel to ensure the accuracy of the data collected by the NMFS-certified observer. Regulations at 50 CFR 660.15(b) state that the vessel operator is responsible for ensuring the vessel crew performs daily testing of all at-sea scales (belt and/or platform). In addition to regulatory requirements for the vessel operator, NMFS-certified observers are required to test the motion-compensated platform scale during their shift and to be present during testing of the flow scale (At-Sea Hake Observer Program Observer Sampling Manual, Version 2014).

The species composition of the catch is determined by the NMFS-certified observer. Because two observers are aboard each vessel the number of hauls sampled are high, at or near 100 percent. C/P vessels endeavor to provide conditions that facilitate large samples of individual hauls. The use of two observers, flow and platform scales, and high rates of sampling leads to very accurate catch accounting for Pacific whiting, non-whiting groundfish, and prohibited species.

The C/P Cooperative acknowledges and agrees that minimizing incidental catch of overfished species to the extent practicable is a primary objective of the C/P Cooperative. In general, incidental catch of overfished species in the C/P sector is very low. For 2015, each C/P Cooperative member agreed to employ bycatch avoidance techniques recommended by the PWCC Board of Directors and Sea State, Inc. Non-whiting groundfish species amounts (functionally, "bycatch limits") allocated by NMFS to the C/P sector were assigned to C/P Cooperative members proportional to their Pacific whiting allocations. These hard caps on incidental catch, if exceeded, would cause the C/P sector to cease fishing, thereby ensuring that C/P Cooperative catch of overfished species is minimized to the extent practicable.

D. Description of Any Actions Taken by the C/P Cooperative in Response to Any Vessels that Exceed Their Allowed Catch and Bycatch

In 2015, no vessels exceeded their allowed catch or bycatch amounts. Minor adjustments to the harvest schedule may be made to accommodate the inseason needs of member vessels. For example, one member company may choose to provide small amounts of their percentage of the annual catcher processor allocation of catch or bycatch to another member company if the former company has completed operations for the year and the latter is still active in the fishery.

E. Plans for the 2016 C/P Cooperative Fishery, Including the Companies Participating in the Cooperative, the Harvest Agreement, and Catch Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

For 2016, companies participating in the C/P Cooperative include:

AMERICAN SEAFOODS COMPANY LLC; GLACIER FISH COMPANY LLC;
TRIDENT SEAFOODS CORPORATION

2016 C/P Cooperative Pacific Whiting Harvest Schedule:

Member	Percentage of Annual Catcher Processor Allocation
American Seafoods Company LLC	49.4%
Trident Seafoods Corporation	29.6%
Glacier Fish Company LLC	21.0%

2016 C/P Cooperative Catch Monitoring and Reporting Requirements:

Each member of the C/P Cooperative carries two NMFS-certified observers aboard each of its vessels to monitor and account for total catch, including catch of prohibited species. Observers report each vessel's daily catch to the NMFS Observer Program in Seattle and to Sea State.

For 2016, the C/P Cooperative will contract with Sea State, Inc. to process the catch data provided by the observer program and to provide in-season management support. Sea State regularly provides catch reports to each C/P vessel, the C/P fleet, and the C/P Cooperative. These reports may include cumulative fleet-wide and vessel-level catch data as well as tow-by-tow summaries. Fleet managers are able to reconcile the tow-by-tow catch information provided by Sea State against their own catch records to identify possible data errors and ensure accurate catch accounting throughout the fishing season.

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Table 1. Final 2015 Catcher-Processor Sector Total Catch

	American Dynasty	American Triumph	Northern Eagle	Northern Jaeger	Alaska Ocean	Pacific Glacier	Island Enterprise	Kodiak Enterprise	Seattle Enterprise	Total
ROUNDFISH (mt)										
Whiting	7,759.96	7,207.27	10,034.37	4,686.82	10,242.67	4,422.80	9,052.47	9,386.27	5,691.22	68,483.85
Pacific Cod	0.00									0.00
Lingcod							0.00			0.00
Pollock	0.00		0.00							0.00
Sablefish	0.55	3.14	4.21	0.15	0.12	0.04	0.11	1.24	0.12	9.67
Roundfish Unidentified					0.06			0.02		0.09
FLATFISH (mt)										
Arrowtooth Flounder	0.72	1.82	3.34	0.00	52.66	5.81	0.30	0.79	0.63	66.09
Dover Sole	0.01	0.46	0.22					0.09	0.00	0.79
English Sole	0.00		0.00					0.00		0.00
Petrale Sole										0.00
Starry Flounder										0.00
Other Flatfish										0.00
Rex Sole	0.61	1.31	3.11	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.61	0.13	5.86
Pacific Sanddab							0.00			0.00
Flathead Sole									0.00	0.00
Slender Sole	0.00	0.00	0.00			0.00				0.01
Flatfish Unidentified									0.00	0.00
ROCKFISH (mt)										
Pacific Ocean Perch	4.86	0.20	0.93		0.06	0.01	0.21	0.50	0.20	6.96
Shortbelly Rockfish		0.00	0.02		0.00		0.00	0.00		0.02
Widow Rockfish	0.10	0.05	0.18	0.01	1.17	0.04	1.25	5.72	8.93	17.43
Canary Rockfish	0.02	0.00			0.00		0.03	0.01	0.01	0.07
Yellowtail Rockfish	0.07		0.20		0.03		0.01	0.19	0.01	0.51
Thornyhead Rockfish Unidentified		0.00								0.00
Shortspine Thornyhead	0.12	2.60	4.70	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.52	0.53	0.27	8.78
Longspine Thornyhead Rockfish			0.01				0.00			0.02
Dark Blotched Rockfish	0.29	1.00	2.90	0.00	0.04	0.02	0.31	0.94	0.05	5.56
Yelloweye Rockfish										0.00
Rockfish Unidentified			0.00				0.00			0.00
Minor Shelf Rockfish North	0.31	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.34
Minor Slope Rockfish North	3.29	1.13	7.64	0.02	2.19	0.32	2.98	5.80	2.89	26.25
REMAINING GROUNDFISH (mt)										
Spiny Dogfish Shark	1.99	1.45	10.17	0.11	54.84	1.80	6.81	9.53	7.68	94.38
Longnose Skate	0.03	0.02	0.09		0.03			0.02		0.19
Other Groundfish	23.25	49.68	55.79	2.28	26.87	15.04	13.02	41.91	23.42	251.25
PROHIBITED and PROTECTED SPP										
Chinook Salmon (numbers of fish)	117.00	61.00	172.37	4.00	470.00	46.45	72.00	486.67	123.00	1,552.49
Chum Salmon (numbers of fish)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	3.00	0.00	5.00
Coho Salmon (numbers of fish)	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00
Pink Salmon (numbers of fish)	0.00	19.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	0.00	23.00
Sockeye Salmon (numbers of fish)										0.00
Steelhead (numbers of fish)										0.00
Salmon Unidentified (numbers of fish)										0.00
Pacific Halibut (mt)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01
Dungeness Crab (numbers of fish)										0.00
Eulachon (mt)	0.00		0.00							0.00
NON-GROUNDFISH SPP (mt)										
American Shad	0.06	0.00	0.06		0.24	0.01	0.01	1.65	0.06	2.08
Pacific Herring	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.02
Humboldt Squid										0.00
Squid Unidentified	8.86	15.17	19.31	1.20	15.46	5.27	9.65	14.94	9.75	99.61
Jack Mackerel	0.10	1.26	0.72		4.63	3.38	3.32	26.07	29.01	68.51
Pacific Mackerel	0.03	0.19	0.06	0.00	14.84	0.67	2.12	19.27	1.80	38.98
Pacific Sardine	0.00	0.00			0.09	0.00	0.05	0.15	0.02	0.32
All Other Non-Groundfish	1.33	2.00	2.30	0.06	0.88	0.67	1.02	3.97	1.69	13.91