

# Pacific Council News

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This newsletter reports mainly on decisions made at the June 2017 Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting. The Council recommends commercial & recreational fishery management measures for Federal waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. All Council recommendations are subject to approval by National Marine Fisheries Service. [Sign up for other notices here](#). The Council has five public meetings a year. The September Council meeting will be held in Boise, Idaho; the public comment deadline for the meeting is 5:00 p.m. on August 15. Email comments to [pfmtc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:pfmtc.comments@noaa.gov).

## Groundfish News

### BOCACCIO, DARKBLOTCHED ROCKFISH REBUILT

Bocaccio and darkblotched rockfish were declared rebuilt by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on June 16.

Bocaccio was declared overfished in 1999. Rebuilding the stock severely constrained commercial and recreational fisheries on the

continental shelf in waters off California south of Cape Mendocino.

Darkblotched rockfish was declared overfished in 2000; rebuilding severely constrained the trawl fishery on the continental slope north of Cape Mendocino.

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In June, the Council adopted new update stock assessments for these two stocks, as well as update assessments for arrowtooth flounder and blackgill rockfish. A new catch report for cowcod was also adopted.

Bocaccio is estimated to be above their target of 40 percent with a depletion of 48 percent at the start of 2017. Darkblotched rockfish is also estimated to be just above the management target of 40 percent with a depletion of 40.03 percent at the start of 2017. Arrowtooth flounder status is considered healthy with a depletion of 87 percent at the start of 2017 (relative to the management target of 25 percent) and an increasing biomass due to strong recent recruitments. Blackgill rockfish status is estimated to be close to, but just below, the management target of 40 percent with a depletion of 39 percent at the start of 2017. The cowcod catch report indicated that recent year (2013-2016) catches have been well below the annual catch limits specified under the cowcod rebuilding plan, and the stock remains on track to be rebuilt by 2019.

**DRAFT REPORTS ON CATCH SHARE PROGRAM REVIEW AND  
INTERSECTOR ALLOCATION PRESENTED**

NMFS and Council analysts presented the draft groundfish trawl catch share review document to the Council and advisory bodies in June. The document reviews the impacts of the groundfish trawl catch share program five years after the program was put in place, and will be released for public review after certain changes recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee and Community Advisory Board (CAB) are made.

In June, the Council also directed staff to finalize the intersector allocation review document after incorporating changes recommended by the Groundfish Management Team. The review of intersector allocations began in 2016.

The Council also began developing a list of catch share review follow-on actions for the CAB to consider this summer. These include elimination of the sablefish management line at 36° N. latitude for the trawl sector, long-term solutions to address at-sea whiting bycatch needs, changing accumulation limits, and alternative management tools/management approaches for constraining species. At its July 27-28 meeting in Portland, the CAB will work on developing preliminary ranges of alternatives on these issues for Council consideration in September 2017. The CAB may also discuss limiting gear-switching and the accumulation of permits and processing in the catcher-processor sector. The Council is scheduled to finalize a range of alternatives for analysis at its November 2017 meeting.

The Council discussed accumulation limits for the catcher-processor sector, and recommended that NMFS announce that any acquisition of catcher-processor permits and/or use of catcher-processor sector whiting allocation after June 13, 2017 might not be included in any grandfather clause adopted by the Council when establishing ownership and/or use limits for catcher-processor permits.



## SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES PROCESS FOR 2019-2020 GROUNDFISH FISHERIES ADOPTED

In June, the Council adopted a process and schedule for 2019-2020 specifications and management measures, with regulations scheduled to be put in place on January 1, 2019.

Council Meeting	Action
<b>September 13-18, 2017</b>	Council reviews/adopts: stock assessments for the six species subject to summer Stock Assessment Review panels; final preferred alternatives for overfishing limits; scientific and management uncertainty values; range of acceptable biological catches (ABC); and preliminary range of new management measures.
<b>November 15-20, 2017</b>	Council reviews/adopts: rebuilding analyses for overfished species, stock assessments, impact projection models; final preferred alternatives for P* (management uncertainty) and ABCs; a preliminary preferred alternative for non-overfished species annual catch limits (ACLs); a range of ACLs for overfished species and a preliminary preferred alternative for those species; a tentative range of two-year allocation alternatives; a final range of new management measures for detailed analysis; and a preliminary selection of exempted fishing permits for 2019-2020.
<b>March 9-14, 2018</b>	Informational briefing; Council takes action on emerging issues, as necessary. NMFS updates the Council on the results of scoping and provides a schedule for regulation deeming and transmittal, as necessary.
<b>April 6-11, 2018</b>	Council adopts a final preferred alternative for ACLs; a preliminary preferred alternative for management measures from the range adopted at the November Council meeting; and a preliminary preferred alternative for two-year allocations.
<b>June 8-13, 2018</b>	Council adopts any corrections to the final preferred alternative for harvest specifications, if needed, as well as the final preferred alternative for allocations and management measures; final exempted fishing permits for 2019-2020; and a list of management measures to be analyzed outside of the harvest specifications and management measures process.

This September in Boise, the Council is scheduled to adopt stock assessments for lingcod, Pacific ocean perch, yelloweye, yellowtail, blue/deacon rockfishes, and California scorpionfish; to take final action on overfishing limits and scientific uncertainty levels; and to adopt a range of P\* values (a measure of risk) to determine acceptable biological catches, if applicable. The Council will also consider a preliminary range of new management measures. Final action for all matters associated with the 2019-2020 harvest specifications and management measures is scheduled for June 2018.

### ROCKFISH CONSERVATION AREA COORDINATES UPDATED

In June, the Council adopted revised coordinates for the 125 fathom (fm) Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) line at Usal and Noyo canyons in California for implementation by NMFS (see [Table 1 in this report](#)). This will provide access to canyons that were previously open when the 150 fm line was in effect between 2003 and 2016. The modifications for Delgada, Point Ano Nuevo, Cordell Banks and any other proposals will be considered in September for implementation in the 2019-2020 harvest specifications and management measures.

The seaward boundary of the non-trawl RCA was changed from 150 fathoms (fm) to 125 fm in the area 40° 10' N. latitude to 34° 27' N. latitude on February 7, based on a Council recommendation. There were several locations where the 125 fm line crossed over the 150 fm line, and the 125 fm line limited access to canyons that were open when the 150 fm line was in place.

## STOCK ASSESSMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMMENTS

Dr. Richard Methot briefed the Council and its advisors on a draft update of the NMFS Stock Assessment Improvement Plan in June. Recommendations provided by the Council’s advisory bodies will be forwarded to NMFS. Comments from all councils will be considered in the final draft of the updated plan, expected in September.

The plan, [Implementing a Next Generation Stock Assessment Enterprise: An Update to NOAA Fisheries’ Stock Assessment Improvement Plan](#), provides strategic guidance for stock assessment programs nationally, including stock assessment standards. Public comments are requested.

## COUNCIL EXPLORING MULTI-YEAR AVERAGE CATCH POLICY

The Council is considering a multi-year average catch policy to provide more flexibility with respect to management of annual catch limits (ACLs). In effect, this policy would better define the factors the Council should consider for inseason management actions when an ACL is projected to be exceeded. In such cases, conservation objectives can still be maintained if the average catch over a prescribed number of years does not exceed the average of specified ACLs during that period.

Such considerations are now possible after last year’s revisions to National Standard 1 guidelines, which created more flexibility in the national harvest management framework.

In September, NMFS will inform the Council whether such a policy will require an amendment to the groundfish fishery management plan and regulations. The Groundfish Management Team and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel were tasked with providing examples of how a new multi-year average catch policy could work to avoid fishery disruptions without compromising conservation objectives.

## NO ACTION TAKEN ON ELECTRONIC TICKET REPORTING TIMELINE

In June, the Council reviewed the options available for first receivers (fish buyers) to comply with the 24-hour reporting requirement for electronic fish tickets, and decided that the existing reporting mechanisms were adequate.

The Council had heard that the reporting requirement was creating a hardship for small operators who do not have personnel available on weekends to complete paperwork for deliveries coming in on Fridays. In April 2017, the Council asked the Enforcement Consultants and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel to discuss the issue.

Currently there are three options for first receivers to complete fish tickets on weekends: tickets can be completed through normal processes if the business is open on the weekend; a worker at the dock can take a photo of the dock receipt and send it to a company employee who has

authorization to complete the electronic ticket; or the first receiver can authorize a worker at the dock to complete fish tickets, but only for a particular site. The Council decided these options were adequate, and does not plan to take further action on the issue.

## INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

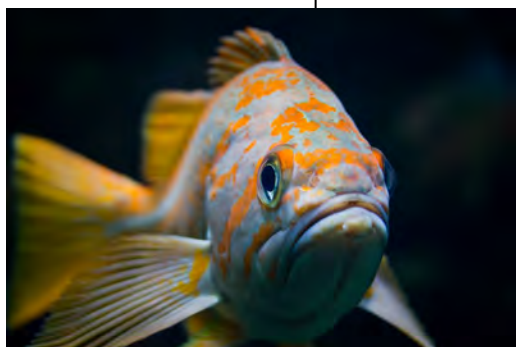
The lingcod limited entry and open access fixed gear limits will be increased as soon as possible, per Council recommendation to NMFS shown in the table at left.

In addition, the Council recommended that the shoreward boundary of the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area between 40° 10' N. latitude and 34° 27' N. latitude be modified from 30 fathoms to 40 fathoms.

Area	Sector	July-Oct	Nov	Dec
North 40° 10' N. Lat.	Limited entry	1,400 lbs. bimonthly	700 lbs.	400 lbs.
	Open access	700 lbs. monthly	700 lbs.	200 lbs.
South 40° 10' N. Lat.	Limited entry	1,200 lbs. bimonthly	600 lbs.	300 lbs.
	Open access	600 lbs. monthly	200 lbs.	150 lbs.

The Council discussed the at-sea sector's challenges in managing rockfish bycatch allocations as the sectors voluntarily move north to avoid Klamath River Chinook salmon. The at-sea sectors noted the possibility of voluntary agreements to transfer canary and widow rockfish allocations between the mothership and catcher-processor sectors. The Council encouraged NMFS to implement such allocation changes if the agreements are forwarded to the agency.

The Council also recommended NMFS allocate the remaining Pacific ocean perch (25 mt) and darkblotched rockfish (50 mt) buffers equally to the mothership and catcher-processor sectors. The Groundfish Management Team will work on developing alternatives for possibly distributing the canary rockfish buffers, and will report back in September. The buffers were established to account for unforeseen catch events in any sector. When such events occur and compromise a sector's ability to access target species, the Council could ask NMFS to release the buffer, thereby providing access to target species. This buffer approach is similar to the process used when groundfish mortality in research, exempted fishing permits, or incidental open access fisheries is lower than the pre-season projections, and a sector needs to access the residual yield.



Canary rockfish. Photo: Randy Chiu, Flickr Creative Commons.

### **MIDWATER ROCKFISH EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT ADOPTED**

A proposed 2018 year-round midwater rockfish exempted fishing permit (EFP) was adopted by the Council in June for public comment and final action in September. The EFP was proposed by the West Coast Seafood Processors Association, Oregon Trawl Commission, Midwater Trawlers Cooperative, and Environmental Defense Fund.

Up to now, use of midwater trawl gear to target nonwhiting species has been limited to areas seaward of the Rockfish Conservation Areas south of 40° 10' N. latitude year-round and after the start of the whiting season on May 15 in all areas to the north.

If approved, the EFP will allow the use of midwater trawl gear coast-wide and year-round to target species other than Pacific whiting, and will also include provisions of the selective flatfish trawl EFP issued for 2017 (see below). It also adds other elements of the Council's proposed gear rule. The EFP will be used to collect information that will inform the NMFS decision on a gear rule already recommended by the Council, and the midwater trawl provisions will help inform a future Council decision on changing midwater trawl gear restrictions.

The new gear-related provisions of the proposed EFP include allowing a vessel to carry and use multiple trawl gears on the same trip. The EFP proponents were asked to work with NMFS Office of Law Enforcement to modify the declaration process in order to accommodate the use of multiple trawl gears. The Council requested that the proposed EFP provisions include documentation of gear type used at the individual haul level; testing whether observers or electronic monitoring can confirm the type of gear being used; and an area-based sub-cap of 80 Chinook salmon for the area south of 42° N. latitude, out of the 800 allowed in the entire EFP area prior to May 15.

The Council asked NMFS to consider whether approval of the EFP for the area north of 42° N. latitude might move forward while approval for south of 42° N. latitude is delayed until the 2018 pre-season Chinook forecasts are available, and/or whether limited elements of the EFP for the area south of 42° N. latitude might be approved.

In March 2016, the Council approved regulations designed to increase flexibility for the trawl

fishery based on the individual accountability and 100 percent at-sea monitoring established by the catch share program. Initially, it was expected that the regulations would be in place for the 2017 season. When that was delayed, the industry proposed a selective flatfish trawl EFP to eliminate the minimum mesh size and the requirement to use selective flatfish trawl shoreward of the Rockfish Conservation Areas north of 40° 10' N. latitude for participating vessels. Vessels fishing under the EFP are able to target midwater pelagic rockfish (primarily widow rockfish and yellowtail rockfish) using modified bottom trawl gear.

Due to concerns over Klamath River fall Chinook, NMFS split the selective flatfish trawl EFP into two geographic areas, north and south of 42° N. latitude. The northern EFP was issued in February 2017, and salmon bycatch limits for the EFP were discussed in March. NMFS declined to implement the southern area EFP due to ongoing concerns about Klamath Chinook salmon. Through June 5, 2017, eight vessels have taken 35 trips and caught four Chinook and 1.65 million pounds of groundfish.



Lingcod. Photo: Eva Funderburgh, Flickr Creative Commons.

### **SABLEFISH AND LINGCOD DISCARD SURVIVAL CREDITS DISCUSSED**

In June, the Council discussed survival credits for lingcod and sablefish discards in the trawl catch share program. The Council plans to revisit this issue in the future, and asked the Groundfish Management Team and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel to help develop alternatives for consideration, and to analyze how changing or removing the lingcod size limits could affect all groundfish fishing sectors.

Annual estimates of groundfish mortality use discard mortality rates of 50 percent for trawl-caught lingcod and sablefish, 20 percent for hook-and-line and pot-caught (longline) sablefish, and 7 percent for longline-caught lingcod.

Therefore, it's assumed that 50 percent of trawl-caught lingcod and sablefish, 80 percent of longline-caught sablefish, and 93 percent of longline-caught lingcod survive after being discarded, regardless of tow depth and duration, time on deck, or location of catch/discard.

Under the trawl catch share program, all estimated discards, regardless of survivability, are debited from vessel quota pound accounts and tracked against the trawl allocation and annual catch limits.

Industry has asked for an individual fishing quota "survival credit" for discarded lingcod and sablefish. Survival credits could help the industry attain its annual catch limits, allocations, and quota pounds. Currently, the industry usually keeps and sells some lingcod and small sablefish, regardless of low price, in order to gain some value from the fish rather than discarding them. If survival credits are used, most of the small sablefish will likely be discarded, and about 50 to 80 percent are expected to survive. The Council recommended analyzing how the revision or removal of the 22-inch lingcod size limit would affect all groundfish fishing sectors. Removing or changing the lingcod size limit could reduce discard of small lingcod.

## *Halibut*

### **CATCH SHARING PLAN CHANGES SCOPED**

This June, the Council discussed the potential for greater allocation changes to future halibut catch sharing plans than could be done through the standard two-Council-meeting process. Typically, the Council considers routine changes to the annual Pacific halibut regulations for



How can this be comfortable? Photo: Ocean Networks Canada, Flickr Creative Commons.

Area 2A each September and November.

Over the past few years, the Council has changed the Catch Sharing Plan in response to high recreational harvests of Pacific halibut off southern Oregon and northern California. These changes were made to provide a larger recreational allocation for California in response to a higher abundance of Pacific halibut and greater interest in the fishery than when the catch sharing plan was originally adopted.

The following options will be considered in September:

- [Recreational options for Washington state](#) intended to provide flexibility to share allocations among Washington recreational subareas, plus a statewide season in May, a reduction of the possession limit to one fish, and an annual bag limit of two halibut per angler.
  - A [combined commercial and recreational allocation for California](#). The allocation would be 7.51 or 7.15 percent of the non-tribal quota, reducing the non-tribal commercial share by 3.51 or 3.15 percent. This compares to the status quo allocation that provides four percent of nontribal allocation to California recreational fisheries and provides 30.7 percent of the nontribal allocation to coastwide commercial fisheries. The California commercial share would provide for incidental retention in the groundfish fixed gear and salmon troll fisheries, and the non-tribal commercial share would then be for north of 42° N. latitude only. California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife may also consider an option that limits the California commercial share to incidental retention in the groundfish fisheries only while maintaining the incidental salmon troll allocation.
  - Increase the California recreational subarea allocation from 4 to 6 percent by equally reducing the Washington and Oregon recreational subarea allocations. Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife may also consider changes to how the incidental halibut limit in the primary sablefish north of Pt. Chehalis is allocated.
  - Options for managing the directed fishery for halibut that would provide a 20-day, 30-day, or shorter season managed with trip limits by vessel length, instead of 10-hour derby openings.
- The Council is scheduled to adopt proposed changes to the 2018 catch sharing plan in September for public review, with final action scheduled for November.

## *Highly Migratory Species*

### **NMFS DECIDES NOT TO IMPLEMENT HARD CAPS FOR THE CALIFORNIA DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY**

In June, NMFS reported that it was not moving forward with regulations to establish “hard caps” on the mortality of protected species in the California large-mesh drift gillnet fishery.

The proposal to establish “hard caps” on the mortality or serious injury of certain high-priority protected species was first proposed by the Council in 2015. Under the proposal, if “take” of any one of the nine species (six marine mammal and three sea turtle species) was reached during a fishing season, the fishery would close for the remainder of the season.

NMFS began developing regulations for this proposal in 2016, publishing a proposed rule in

November 2016 and soliciting public comment. Based in part on the public comments it received, NMFS concluded the measure could cause significant economic hardship for fishery participants with limited conservation benefits. NMFS subsequently decided not move forward with implementing regulations.

In announcing its decision, NMFS encouraged the Council to consider other measures to meet its purpose. NMFS also encouraged the Council to continue its engagement with the Pacific Offshore Cetacean Take Reduction Team, which aims to reduce the incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in the drift gillnet fishery.

The Council was disappointed with the NMFS decision to halt implementation of the hard cap rule. While the current Endangered Species Act consultation standards do a good job of protecting and rebuilding listed species, they focus on population-level effects, and don't necessarily have immediate consequences to the fisheries when thresholds are reached. The



Monterey albacore.  
Photo: David Salafia,  
Flickr Creative  
Commons.

hard cap rule was intended to provide an incentive to fishermen to further avoid interactions with protected species. The individual responsibility associated with the hard caps would promote communication and innovation by fishermen in order to avoid interactions, in much the same way the groundfish catch share program has reduced bycatch in that fishery.

### **COUNCIL ADOPTS CHANGES TO HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

In June, the Council adopted proposed changes to the highly migratory species fishery management plan for public review. The changes were first recommended in 2016 as a "housekeeping" amendment to update

information in the plan such as references to state regulations, management unit stock structures, and estimates of maximum sustainable yield.

A revised version will be circulated before the September Council meeting. The changes are based on management team and advisory subpanel recommendations.

NMFS made recommendations about the process it uses to make highly migratory species status determinations. The recommendations were endorsed and expanded upon by the Council in March.

### **DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR ALTERNATIVES ENDORSED**

In June, the Council endorsed a range of alternatives for authorizing deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) under the highly migratory species fishery management plan. The alternatives were proposed by the Highly Migratory Species Management Team, with a few refinements.

Two types of buoy gear have been developed. Standard buoy gear consists of a weighted vertical monofilament mainline suspended from a strike indicator float system that quickly sends up to three hooks to a depth of 300 feet or more. The gear is set during the day, when swordfish are usually in deep water, below the surface zone where sea turtles and marine mammals are normally found. Up to 10 pieces of gear are set at any one time, and the fisherman must stay close by the gear at all times to check whether a strike has occurred. The strike detection system



allows the gear to be quickly retrieved when a fish is hooked; this also allows quick release of unwanted animals.

A more recent variation, linked buoy gear, is designed for larger boats. Two or more pieces of gear are joined together with hooks suspended from the horizontal line joining the floats. Linked buoy gear has the same strike detection system as the standard configuration, and is deployed in a similar manner.

The Council's alternatives for authorizing DSBG include restricting the fishery to depths greater than 150 fathoms, allowing drift gillnet permittees to surrender a permit in exchange for one or more DSBG permits, discouraging the use of gear at night while allowing for gear retrieval after dusk, developing guidelines for engaging in other commercial fishing activities on the same trip where DSBG is deployed, restricting DSBG fishing in the Southern California Bight to

weekdays only to avoid conflicts with recreational fisheries, and limiting analysis of the area for the fishery to Federal waters off California and Oregon. The Council also clarified that the "open access" permitting alternative would be accomplished through a DSBG endorsement on the current Federal HMS permit.

DSBG research and development has been ongoing since 2010. Results to date suggest the gear has minimal bycatch and could be a complement to gear types used to target swordfish off the West Coast.

The Council is scheduled to adopt a range of alternatives for public review in September 2017.

### **DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS MOVE FORWARD**

Nineteen deep-set buoy gear exempted fishing permits will go forward if NMFS concurs with Council recommendations at the June Council meeting. Observer coverage levels endorsed by the Council range from 30 percent to 100 percent depending on the experience of the participant in the DSBG fishery. In addition, the Council noted that most applicants proposed fishing in the Southern California Bight and expressed concern about potential gear conflicts, depending on the level of fishing effort. For that reason, in the future, applications that propose fishing outside the Southern California Bight may be prioritized in the approval process.

In June 2016, the Council announced it would accept for review applications for exempted fishing permits to test deep-set buoy gear at any Council meeting when highly migratory species items are on the agenda. The deadline for EFP applications for the September Council meeting is 5 p.m., August 15.

### **COUNCIL DISCUSSES BLUEFIN REBUILDING, OTHER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

The development of a rebuilding plan for Pacific bluefin tuna is a high-priority international issue for the Council. The stock is currently estimated at 2.6 percent of unfished biomass. In June, the Council supported the draft U.S. proposal to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) for a second rebuilding target for Pacific bluefin tuna (20 percent of the unfished spawning stock biomass, assuming current recruitment) to be achieved by 2030 with



A striped—or possibly blue—marlin caught and released in Mexico. Photo: Kate Crandell, Flickr Creative Commons.

at least 60 percent probability. This target is a reasonable approximation of maximum sustainable yield.

The Council also recommended that the U.S. delegation to the July 24-28 IATTC meeting advocate for the U.S. proposal on observer safety, which, among other things, require safety equipment (a two-way communication device and personal locator beacon) to be provided to observers on large purse seine vessels, and on longline vessels greater than 20 meters in length.

The Western and Central Pacific Ocean stock and Eastern Pacific Ocean stock of bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) will be monitored separately by NMFS. The Eastern Pacific Ocean stock is not subject to overfishing and not overfished, while the Western and Central stock is subject to overfishing, but is not overfished (in other words, too much fishing is occurring, but the stock is not yet overfished). Vessels managed under the Pacific Council are unlikely to catch fish from the Western and Central stock.

In addition, NMFS notified the Council that the Western and Central North Pacific Ocean stock of striped marlin (*Kajikia audax*) is overfished and subject to overfishing, and that the Council must take action to address the status of this stock. Although striped marlin is a Council-managed species, all known U.S. fishing on this stock is under the jurisdiction of the

Western Pacific Council. The Council determined that there is no need for additional domestic regulations, since vessels managed under the highly migratory species fishery management plan do not catch fish from this stock. The Council noted that objectives adopted by the Western and Central Fisheries Commission are being met.

	2017-18	2018-19
Biomass	143,403 mt	131,724 mt
Overfishing Limit	30,115 mt	27,662 mt
ABC <sub>0.45</sub>	27,510 mt	25,269 mt
Annual catch limit (=ABC)	27,510 mt	25,269 mt
Harvest Guideline	26,293 mt	23,840 mt
Annual Catch Target	25,293 mt	22,840 mt
Incidental	1,000 mt	1,000 mt

## Coastal Pelagic Species

### PACIFIC MACKEREL STOCK ASSESSMENT, MANAGEMENT MEASURES ADOPTED

In June, the Council adopted management and harvest specifications for Pacific mackerel for two consecutive fishing years (2017-18 and 2018-19) (see table, left). The fishing seasons for Pacific mackerel begin July 1 and end June 30 of the following year.

Pacific mackerel harvest specifications.

If the directed fishery reaches the annual catch target, it will be closed and shift to an incidental-only fishery for the remainder of the fishing year, with a 45 percent incidental landing allowance when Pacific mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species, and up to three metric tons of Pacific mackerel per landing may be landed in non-coastal pelagic species fisheries. When the 1,000 metric ton incidental allowance is met, no Pacific mackerel may be retained.

### AERIAL SURVEY METHODOLOGY APPROVED

The Southern California Coastal Pelagic Species Survey, which uses an aerial survey to inform abundance estimates for northern anchovy and Pacific sardine in nearshore waters, was approved for use in future coastal pelagic species stock assessments in June subject to the recommendations of the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

The survey was reviewed by a panel at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, California, April 17-18, as well as by Council advisory bodies. It is designed to provide a better picture of the biomass of anchovies and other coastal pelagic species in nearshore areas that are inaccessible to the NOAA survey vessel.

The methodology proposed two projects. The first provides an estimate of nearshore abundance, and was approved contingent on developing an estimate that captures uncertainty. Before combining the aerial survey with the acoustic trawl survey, the people conducting both surveys were directed to work together to consider the recommendations in the review panel's [report](#).

The second project would provide a correction factor to the acoustic trawl survey conducted by NOAA. This project is not currently possible because it depends on estimating the proportion of fish that are visible from the air, and such an estimate is currently unavailable.



The Klamath River near Happy Camp, CA. Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## *Other News*

### **HABITAT REPORT**

In April and June, the Habitat Committee discussed Klamath dam issues, resulting in [a letter sent by the Council to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission](#) (FERC) in June. The letter supports the decommissioning of the four lower Klamath dams and the transfer of their ownership to the Klamath River Renewal Corporation in preparation for removal of the dams in 2020.

In addition, the Habitat Committee discussed the Oroville Dam relicensing process and temperature controls in the NMFS Biological Opinion. The Habitat Committee plans to schedule a publicly-noticed conference call to communicate with FERC and California Dept. of Water Resources staff. A webinar or conference call will be scheduled between the June and September Council meetings.

The Habitat Committee also discussed the Environmental Protection Agency Draft Revised National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit. At the time, the permit had not been released by the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Council chose not to send a letter based on Habitat Committee recommendations. The proposed permit ("[General Permit for Offshore Seafood Processors in Federal Waters off the Coast of Washington and Oregon](#)") has since been released; the comment period ends August 3, 2017.

### **LEGISLATIVE REPORT: NEW MSA BILL, CRAB BILL STALLED, YOUNG FISHERMEN'S TRAINING PROPOSED**

A new bill has been introduced to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (HR 2023). The bill (which may eventually be folded into a reauthorization bill) has several provisions focused on the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions, but also contains provisions that could negatively affect the Council process. Specifically, HR 2023 would require the Secretary of Commerce to follow new procedures before approving exempted fishing permits, including peer review and certain determinations; and any EFP would expire after a year. Additionally, HR 2023 includes provisions to provide flexibility in rebuilding depleted species and the application of annual catch limits that may have repercussions for Pacific Council fisheries. The Council has not been asked to comment on the bill.

Two bills that would remove the sunset provision regarding state management of Dungeness crab are struggling to move forward. S 61 and HR 374 seem to be stalled, although efforts are

being made to move the bill forward.

Another bill, the Young Fishermen's Development Act (HR 2079), aims to preserve American fishing heritage through a national program dedicated to training and assisting the next generation of commercial fishermen. The bill, introduced by Don Young (AK), would establish a national grant program, acting through Sea Grant, to train and educate the next generation of commercial fishermen. The bill would make available grants and training for young fishermen relating to seamanship, navigation, electronics, and safety; vessel and engine care, maintenance, and repair; conservation fishing gear engineering and technology; sustainable fishing practices; entrepreneurship; marketing and traceability; vessel, permit, and quota purchasing; legal requirements for fisheries; and other activities. See the last page of the newsletter for related information on the Marine Resource Education Program.

## **KEVIN WERNER NAMED NEW NWFSC SCIENCE AND RESEARCH DIRECTOR**

Kevin Werner, Ph.D., has been appointed as the new Science and Research Director for NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center.

"I am delighted that Kevin was selected as the new Northwest Center Director," said Dr. Cisco Werner, Acting Chief Science Advisor for NOAA Fisheries. "He has some big shoes to fill following John Stein as director, but his unique mix of skills and experience will continue the Center's strong focus on recognizing, researching, and mitigating the impacts of changing ocean conditions on marine resources, the marine and freshwater environments, and all of the people and communities that depend on robust, sustainable marine fisheries now and into the future."

A former NOAA Corps officer, Dr. Kevin Werner has held various positions with NOAA for almost two decades.

## **NORTH PACIFIC'S CHRIS OLIVER NAMED ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR**

Chris Oliver, formerly Executive Director of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, has been named Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries. The Texas native assumed his new position on June 19, taking the helm from Acting Assistant Administrator Samuel Rauch, who will return to his position as the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs.

As the agency's new Assistant Administrator, Oliver will oversee the management and conservation of recreational and commercial fisheries including some aspects of marine aquaculture, the preservation and maintenance of safe sources of seafood, and the protection of marine mammals, marine protected species, and coastal fisheries habitat within the U.S. exclusive economic zone.

Oliver most recently served as Executive Director of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, a position he held for the past 16 years. He has been with the Council since 1990, also serving as a fisheries biologist and then deputy director. During his tenure as executive director he led the way on several cutting edge management initiatives, including development of limited access privilege programs and fishery cooperatives and catch share programs, the North Pacific's comprehensive onboard observer program, numerous bycatch reduction programs, extensive habitat protection measures, commercial and recreational allocation programs, and coastal community development programs. He was also responsible for all administrative and operational aspects of the Council process, and lead staffer for legislative and international issues.

"I understand how important stakeholder involvement, transparency, and best available science are to making the right policy decisions and I plan to ensure those tenets of the Magnuson-Stevens Act are applied across the board while I am leading the agency," he said. "I intend to rely heavily upon the regional expertise of the eight fishery management Councils and the associated NOAA Fisheries Regions and Science Centers, and to ensure they have the resources necessary to effectively tackle region-specific issues."

## September Council Meeting Agenda

### GROUND FISH

- ◆ Off-year science improvements
- ◆ Stock assessment methodology review topic selection
- ◆ Coastwide nonwhiting midwater trawl exempted fishing permit final action, and gear modification exempted fishing permit review/renewal
- ◆ Flexibility in annual catch limit management response, scoping
- ◆ Electronic monitoring halibut discard mortality rates
- ◆ Catch share review
- ◆ Adopt final stock assessments
- ◆ Initial harvest specifications and management measures
- ◆ Inseason adjustments

### COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES

- ◆ Acoustic trawl survey methodology review terms of reference

### HALIBUT

- ◆ Catch Sharing Plan changes

### HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES

- ◆ Swordfish management project planning
- ◆ International management activities
- ◆ Amendment 4 status determination criteria final action
- ◆ Exempted fishing permits: final approval
- ◆ Deep-set buoy gear authorization range of alternatives

### OTHER

- ◆ Salmon methodology review topic selection
- ◆ Sacramento River Winter Chinook salmon control rule preliminary recommendations
- ◆ Legislative matters
- ◆ Habitat matters
- ◆ Fishery Ecosystem Plan initiatives: Selection and scoping
- ◆ Sablefish ecosystem indicators
- ◆ Climate vulnerability assessment report

## NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT REVIEWS ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES

The NOAA Office of Law Enforcement West Coast Division has developed a draft set of enforcement priorities for 2018–2022 that was presented to the Council in June. The Council agreed with the draft West Coast priorities.

A public comment period on the priorities will be open for 30 days as soon as the final set of draft priorities is published on the Office of Law Enforcement website. The priorities list is used to focus limited law enforcement resources on the most critical enforcement challenges.

The draft priorities list focuses on sanctuary protections; sustainable fisheries; protected resources; illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing; wildlife trafficking; and seafood fraud.

## APPOINTMENTS AND COUNCIL PROCESSES

**Brad Pettinger** has been appointed to the Oregon At-Large seat on Council, replacing **Jeff Feldner**, who has served two terms. **Rich Lincoln** was also reappointed for a third term. In addition, the Council elected **Phil Anderson** as the Council Chair and **David Crabbe** as the Vice-Chair for the August 11, 2017 through August 10, 2018 term.

**Corey Ridings** was appointed to the vacant California seat on the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel, and **Dr. Andrew (Ole) Shelton** was appointed to the vacant NMFS Northwest

Fisheries Science Center seat on the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

The Council adopted changes to Council Operating Procedure 4 regarding Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) membership, replacing the designated Alaska Fisheries Science Center seat with an at-large seat.

## **CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The Council is seeking qualified applicants to fill a newly created at-large seat on the SSC to replace an Alaska Fisheries Science Center seat currently held by **Dr. Martin Dorn**. The successful candidate will serve out the remainder of the 2016-2018 Council advisory body term. The Council is interested in filling the new at-large seat in advance of Dr. Dorn's anticipated departure from the SSC on November 30, 2017. The Council and its SSC are scheduled to review nominations and potentially fill the vacancy at their September 11-18, 2017 meeting in Boise. Nominations must include a curriculum vitae, a completed Pacific Council Advisory Body Nomination Form, and a NOAA Financial Interest Statement. To ensure consideration, nominations should be received at the Council office no later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday, August 15, 2017. Required forms and detailed information on the vacancy and the nomination process are available on the Council web page.

## *Upcoming Meetings*

### **GROUND FISH STOCK ASSESSMENT REVIEW (STAR) PANEL: YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH AND YELLOWTAIL ROCKFISH**

Dates: July 10-14

Location: NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center Auditorium, Seattle. The meeting will also be streamed online.

Purpose: To review draft 2017 stock assessment documents and other pertinent information; work with the Stock Assessment Teams to make necessary revisions; and produce STAR Panel reports for use by the Council for developing management recommendations for 2019 and beyond fisheries. No management actions will be decided by the STAR Panel.

Contact: John DeVore ([John.DeVore@noaa.gov](mailto:John.DeVore@noaa.gov))

For More Info: <http://tinyurl.com/y7k6bn2q>

### **GROUND FISH STOCK ASSESSMENT REVIEW (STAR) PANEL: BLUE/DEACON ROCKFISH AND CALIFORNIA SCORPIONFISH**

Dates: July 24-28

Location: NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Meeting Room 188, Santa Cruz. The meeting will also be streamed online.

Purpose: See above.

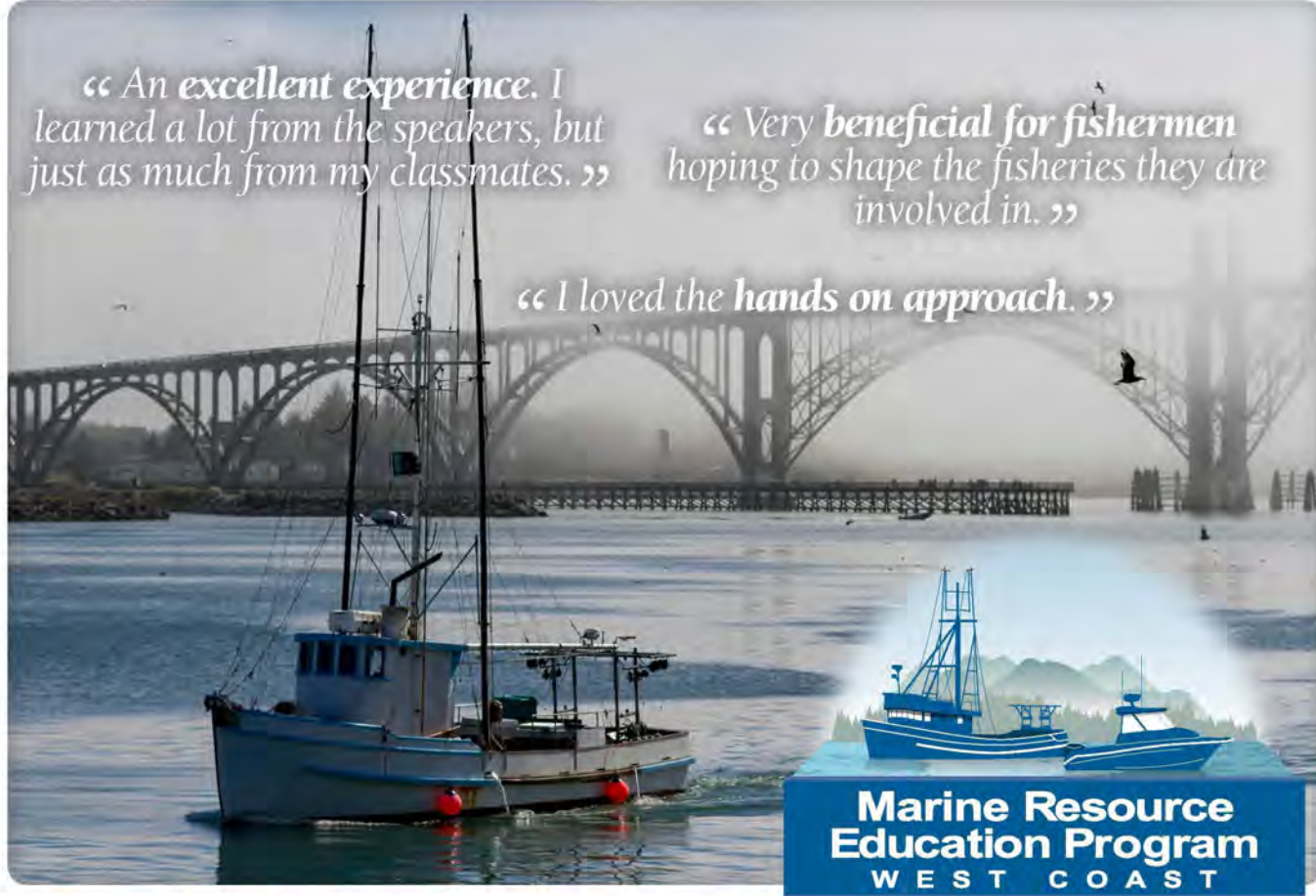
Contact: John DeVore ([John.DeVore@noaa.gov](mailto:John.DeVore@noaa.gov))

For More Info: <http://tinyurl.com/y7k6bn2q>

*“ An excellent experience. I learned a lot from the speakers, but just as much from my classmates. ”*

*“ Very beneficial for fishermen hoping to shape the fisheries they are involved in. ”*

*“ I loved the hands on approach. ”*



The Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) provides fishermen, and others with an interest in productive fisheries, an opportunity to learn how the federal fishery science and management processes are applied in the Pacific region. The MREP West Coast workshops are tailored specifically to the region and bring together commercial, charter, and recreational fishermen with scientists, managers, and other marine resource professionals to learn the processes, share their insights, and network in a neutral and professional setting. Participants leave the program empowered and better prepared to be a voice in federal fisheries management. The 2017 workshop dates and locations are on the right.

Applications will be reviewed in July 2017. Selected participants will be notified by phone and email. Meals and accommodations are provided during the workshops, and travel support is available for most applicants.

For questions about the program, please call **Bob Dooley**, commercial fisherman at (650) 619-4713, **Dan Woldford**, recreational fisherman at (408) 656-1524 or **Heather Mann**, MREP moderator at (541) 272-4544. Program staff can be contacted at: Alexa Dayton (207) 228-1645 or Chris McHan (207) 228-1684.

## 2017 Workshops

### Fisheries Science Workshop

August 28 – 30, 2017

Hotel Paradox  
611 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA

### Fisheries Management Workshop

October 17 – 19, 2017

Hotel Kimpton Monaco  
506 SW Washington St, Portland, OR

Applications can be completed at [www.gmri.org/mrepwest](http://www.gmri.org/mrepwest) or you can contact one of the MREP representatives listed on left.

Seating is limited, apply today!