

# Pacific Council News

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REPORTING ON WEST COAST FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

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Pacific ocean perch. Photo  
Washington Dept. of Fish  
and Wildlife

## Groundfish

### PACIFIC OCEAN PERCH, FORMERLY OVERFISHED, NOW REBUILT

An important West Coast groundfish stock that was formerly overfished has now been rebuilt.

Pacific ocean perch, which is managed by the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS or NOAA Fisheries), has constrained the West Coast trawl fishery for decades. Pacific ocean perch has been overfished since the mid-1960s when foreign fleets targeted groundfish stocks, in particular Pacific ocean perch, off the U.S. West Coast. The mandates of the 1976 Magnuson-Stevens Act, the primary law governing U.S. fisheries management, eventually ended foreign fishing within 200

miles of the U.S. coast. The first Federal trip limits to discourage targeting and to conserve a U.S. West Coast groundfish stock were implemented for Pacific ocean perch in 1979 by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and NMFS. Rebuilding plans for Pacific ocean perch were adopted in 2000 and 2003.

Managing groundfish fisheries under rebuilding plans has been an immense challenge for the Pacific Council and the NMFS. These plans required sharp reductions in commercial and recreational fisheries targeting groundfish, and included widespread fishing closures through the establishment of Rockfish Conservation Areas off the West Coast and other measures.

“We are pleased to see that our management strategies have been successful in rebuilding this important groundfish stock, and want to acknowledge the industries’ cooperation and sacrifice

This newsletter reports on decisions made at the November 2017 Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting. The Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils in the U.S. and 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. The Council has five public meetings a year. The March 2018 Council meeting will be held in Rohnert Park, California; the public comment deadline for the meeting is 5 p.m. on February 8. The supplemental public comment deadline is 5 p.m. on February 26. Email comments to [pfmc.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:pfmc.comments@noaa.gov). [Sign up for other notices here.](#)

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in this effort,” said Council Chair Phil Anderson. “We also want to recognize NMFS for committing the resources to monitor and research groundfish stocks to improve the science used to sustainably manage these stocks.”

Since 2003, managing overfished species through area closures such as the Rockfish Conservation Areas has helped to reduce fishing impacts and rebuild overfished groundfish species. In addition, the groundfish fleet has had to limit fishing for other more abundant species to avoid unintentional catch of the overfished stocks. “It is remarkable that the rebuilding of Pacific ocean perch was accomplished 34 years ahead of schedule,” said Barry Thom, Regional Administrator of NMFS’ West Coast Region. “It is the strong partnership between fishery managers and industry and the strong commitment to catch limitations that allowed it to happen.”

These strategies have been used to successfully rebuild eight groundfish stocks, including Pacific whiting, bocaccio, darkblotched rockfish, lingcod, canary rockfish, widow rockfish, petrale sole, and Pacific ocean perch. Canary rockfish was declared rebuilt in 2015 and earlier this year, bocaccio and darkblotched rockfish were also declared rebuilt. These successes reflect the support and sacrifice of West Coast ports and fishermen who recognized the difficult actions and fishing cutbacks necessary to restore the stocks.

Only two overfished stocks—cowcod and yelloweye rockfish—continue to be managed under rebuilding plans. Both have shown dramatic rebuilding progress, with cowcod projected to be rebuilt by 2019 and yelloweye rockfish as soon as 2027. Improvements in the status of these two stocks, coupled with the successful rebuilding of the other eight groundfish stocks declared overfished in the past, will lead to increased fishing opportunities beginning in 2019. The Pacific Council is scheduled to make their final decisions on 2019 and 2020 groundfish fisheries next June at their meeting in Spokane, Washington.

*Process*

The Pacific ocean perch assessment was developed by NMFS scientists at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center and was reviewed in the Council’s stock assessment review process with a final endorsement by the Council Scientific and Statistical Committee. On December 11, NMFS formally determined the stock’s status as rebuilt.

**GROUNDFISH TRAWL CATCH SHARE REVIEW FINALIZED**

In November, the Council finalized the trawl catch share review document and continued its work on follow-on actions. A range of follow-on action alternatives will be adopted for analysis in the spring.

Some of the follow-on actions will be considered during the biennial specifications process for groundfish. These include daily vessel quota pound limits (though possibly only for rebuilt species, i.e. excluding cowcod, yelloweye, and Pacific halibut); and continuing the adaptive management program pass-through. These actions may be put in place at the start of 2019.

In March 2018, the Council will finalize a range of alternatives for other issues to be analyzed over the summer, with a final decision expected in the fall of 2018. The

**FINAL  
ACTION**

issues to be discussed in March include at-sea set-asides (permanently changing bycatch management for the at-sea fishery from catch limits to set-asides for canary rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, Pacific ocean perch and widow rockfish, and removing the formulas for allocation and set-aside amounts for darkblotched rockfish, Pacific ocean perch and widow rockfish from the fishery management plan); revising individual species annual vessel quota pound limits; allowing post-season quota pound trading and providing post-season relief from vessel quota pound limits; eliminating the September 1st expiration for quota pounds that have not been moved to a vessel account; establishing catcher-processor accumulation limits for permit ownership and amount of processing (including a decision on whether to apply the limits immediately or only if the catcher-processor co-op reverts to an individual fishing quota program); requiring the submission of catcher processor ownership information during the permit review process; and requiring all owners of quota shares to provide information on their ownership to the Economic Data Collection Program (currently only quota owners who also own vessels or first receiver licenses are required to submit this information).



*Captain and crew pose with sablefish caught off the coast of Half Moon Bay, California. Photo: Ethan Righter via NOAA.*

The Council requested additional information on the sablefish 36 degree line (the Council is considering eliminating the line for trawl sector management), limiting gear switching, and changing the sablefish annual vessel quota pound limit. The process for considering these issues will be discussed in March.

At its September 2018 meeting, the Council will take up increasing the quota pound carryover to some amount above 10 percent as part of its consideration of flexibility in annual catch limit management.

Finally, the Council will consider between-sector quota pound trading, trawl/nontrawl allocation, carryover of at-sea set asides, and aggregate nonwhiting control limits in the fall of 2018 when it considers all of its groundfish priorities as part of its omnibus workload planning process.

For more information, see <http://tinyurl.com/y8dosrr8>.

## FINAL ACTION TAKEN ON MID-BIENNIAL HARVEST SPEX

The Council was considering a new policy to allow an increase in groundfish harvest specifications in the second year of a biennial management cycle when a new assessment shows a substantial increase in the available harvest of a stock, but decided to halt further consideration of this policy due to the need to focus on other high-priority tasks. The Council may revisit this policy next September when they are scheduled to prioritize all groundfish tasks and initiatives for future consideration.

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## BIENNIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES RECOMMENDED FOR 2019-2020

In November, the Council adopted final 2019 and 2020 overfishing limits except for yelloweye rockfish, final acceptable biological catches (ABCs), and a preliminary range of annual catch limits (ACLs) recommended by the [Groundfish Management Team](#) and [Groundfish Advisory Subpanel](#). The Council adopted preliminary preferred ACLs for all stocks except yelloweye rockfish. Default harvest control rules were changed for lingcod and California scorpionfish, which increased the preliminary preferred ACLs for lingcod north and south of 40°10' N lat. and California scorpionfish south of 34°27' N lat. (Note: An error in the lingcod specifications was

**FINAL  
ACTION in  
APRIL**





*Cabezon motionless on rock, Point Lobos State Park, California. Photo: Lt. John Crofts, NOAA Corps.*

discovered after the November meeting. Lingcod harvest specifications will be revisited in March.)

Yelloweye rockfish overfishing limits depend on the final ACLs for that stock. The Council selected three alternative harvest control rules for managing yelloweye: status quo harvest specifications under the spawning potential ratio harvest rate of 76 percent; and harvest specifications under the spawning potential ratio harvest rates of 70 percent and 65 percent based on the [yelloweye rebuilding analysis](#). The yelloweye rockfish ACL range for analysis is 29 to 49 metric tons. The Council did not indicate a preference at this time.

The Council also adopted stock category designations and sigma values, which are used to determine acceptable biological catches (ABCs) (sigma, the estimated biomass

uncertainty, and  $P^*$ , the overfishing probability, are used to determine the size of the precautionary reduction from the overfishing limit, which defines the ABC).

The Council is scheduled to choose final 2019 and 2020 ACLs and make a final decision on the yelloweye rockfish rebuilding plan at their April meeting in Portland, Oregon.

#### *Management Measures*

The Council provided guidance on the methods and values necessary to begin analysis of management measures for 2019-2020. The Council recommended stock complex alternatives that affect the following stocks: Oregon blue/deacon rockfishes, Oregon black rockfish, and the Nearshore Rockfish North of 40° 10' N. latitude complex; and Oregon kelp greenling, Oregon cabezon, and the Other Fish complex. Additionally, the Council forwarded an alternative for analysis that would remove Washington cabezon and Washington kelp greenling from the "Other Fish" complex and manage them in a separate Washington cabezon/kelp greenling complex.

The Council also included the following new measures for analysis (<http://tinyurl.com/y8jr4n2k>): salmon mitigation measures for midwater trawl gears and rules for all sectors for accessing the salmon reserve; sablefish and lingcod discard mortality rates applied to Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program quota pounds; removal of the daily vessel limits in the Shorebased IFQ program; and removal of the automatic action provision that

### **COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS RECEIVE PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

In November, the Council adopted two coastal pelagic species exempted fishing permit (EFP) proposals for public review. The Southern California Aerial Survey proposal ([tinyurl.com/yawt43px](http://tinyurl.com/yawt43px)) was submitted by the California Wetfish Producers Association. The [Northwest Nearshore Surveillance](#) application was submitted by the West Coast Pelagic Conservation Group and both are designed to supplement ongoing NOAA and California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife surveys and biological sampling. The proponents plan to modify the proposals based on advisory body recommendations; the Council is scheduled for final action in April. If the Council approves the proposals in April, the proponents will then apply to NMFS for the EFPs.

**FINAL  
ACTION in  
APRIL**



*Deployed single streamer line. Photo courtesy of Ed Melvin, Washington Sea Grant.*

closes the at-sea Pacific whiting sectors if a darkblotched or Pacific ocean perch set-aside and the associated buffer is attained.

The results of the 2019-2020 harvest specifications and management measure analysis will be provided to the Council during an informational presentation at the March 2018 meeting. In April 2018, the Council is scheduled to adopt a preliminary preferred suite of management measures. After a public review period, the Council will take final action at the June 2018 Council meeting with implementation scheduled for January 1, 2019.

## **PROGRESS MADE ON ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT CONSULTATIONS ON SALMON, SEABIRDS**

In November, NMFS reported on progress completing a biological opinion on the take of salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act in the groundfish fishery, and the Council discussed the range of measures to mitigate such take.

NMFS asked to reinitiate consultation on this issue in 2013. Since then, NMFS has worked with the Council to develop a description of groundfish fisheries upon which the consultation would be based. Earlier this year, the Council recommended that NMFS consider additional bycatch mitigation measures as part of the 2019-2020 biennial harvest specifications and management measures process; this was the basis of the November discussions. NMFS used this guidance to write a biological opinion—published on December 11—to determine if the proposed action meets the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

### *Measures to Reduce Seabird Takes*

In a recently completed Endangered Species Act biological opinion, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) reviewed the effects of the groundfish fishery on short-tailed albatross. Although critically endangered (at one time they were thought to be extinct), the population is steadily recovering, meaning that – although still rare – more of these birds are showing up off the west coast.

In its biological opinion, USFWS identified several actions that NMFS must take to minimize take of short-tailed albatross. Of these, the Council is expected to be directly engaged in changing regulatory requirements for the longline fishery. Currently, bird scaring streamer lines are required on longline vessels 55 feet and longer (see photo, this page). The streamer lines deter seabirds from diving on baited hooks when the gear is being deployed from the vessel but still near the surface. Seabirds can become hooked and drown when they are pulled under as the longline sinks. The USFWS concluded that the streamer line requirement must be extended to smaller vessels, 26 feet and longer. As an alternative, vessels could instead set their gear at night (after “civil sunset”). Seabirds are much less active at night and research has shown that night setting is an effective alternative to using streamer lines, which may be harder to use on small vessels. The Council adopted a schedule for revising the longline fishery regulations, beginning in September 2018. In any case, USFWS told NMFS it must implement revised regulations by April 2020.

Many longline vessels attach floats to the mainline so that hooks are suspended a few feet off the bottom. These floats mean that the gear sinks more slowly. The slower sink rate make streamer

lines less effective, because the gear is still near the surface beyond the streamer lines. Seabirds can also strike trawl warps and especially the “third wire” that connects instruments on the net to the vessel. In the biological opinion, USFWS directed NMFS to conduct research on methods to further reduce seabird deaths in the groundfish fishery stemming from these practices. It’s possible that NMFS may come back to the Council at some future date to consider regulatory proposals addressing the effects of these fishing practices on seabirds.



*Juvenile yelloweye rockfish (striped, in back) with rosy rockfish in foreground. Channel Islands, 2010. Photo: John Butler, NOAA.*

## **PRELIMINARY EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS APPROVED FOR 2019-2020**

In November, the Council recommended four groundfish exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications for public review. EFPs authorize vessels to engage in an activity that is otherwise prohibited in order to collect experimental data.

**FINAL  
ACTION in  
JUNE**

[The first EFP](#), from the San Francisco Community Fishing Association and Dan Platt, is for renewal of a 2017-2018 EFP, with modifications, for yellowtail rockfish jig fishing in the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) off California.

[The second](#) is from Scott Cook and the Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, for commercial midwater hook and line rockfish fishing in the RCA off Oregon. The Council recommended that caps be reduced to 0.12 metric tons (mt) for yelloweye rockfish and 3 mt for canary.

[The third EFP](#) and [its addendum](#) are from Tom Mattusch for recreational longleader fishing for chilipepper and yellowtail rockfish in the Rockfish Conservation Area. The Council recommended that vessels under this EFP be identified with a research banner.

[The fourth EFP](#), from Really Good Fish (a Monterey community-supported fishery), aims to test new gear (salmon gurdies, drop lines and reels, and artificial flies), explore areas with high chilipepper abundance and low overfished species abundance, and test electronic monitoring methods to target chilipepper rockfish. The Council recommended that caps be increased for yelloweye to 0.06 mt.

The Council is scheduled to make their final recommendations for 2019-2020 EFPs at the June 2018 meeting in Spokane, Washington.

## **TOPICS SET FOR METHODOLOGY REVIEW**

In November, the Council adopted the off-year science and stock assessment methodology review recommendations of the Scientific and Statistical Committee ([tinyurl.com/yahkmg44](http://tinyurl.com/yahkmg44)).

Workshops that will be conducted next year include a review of data-limited methods for use in groundfish stock assessments and a follow-up workshop on historical catch reconstruction with a focus on skate species. A methodology review will look at catch estimation methods in sparsely sampled mixed-stock fisheries, and a review of remotely operated vehicle (ROV) surveys of nearshore stocks in California and Oregon is planned to explore how data collected by ROVs can be used to inform stock assessments.

## **COUNCIL RECOMMENDS HALIBUT DISCARD MORTALITY RATES, THIRD-PARTY REVIEW POLICY**

In November, the Council finalized halibut discard mortality rates in the bottom trawl and non-whiting midwater trawl fisheries. The Council also selected a process to adjust fishery-specific



discard species lists, and finalized a policy for third-party video review of electronic monitoring video to assess compliance.

#### *Pacific Halibut Discard Mortality Rate*

A discard mortality rate model based on time on deck for each halibut may be applied to vessels that discard halibut while using electronic monitoring. The Scientific and Statistical Committee tentatively approved [a discard mortality rate](#) for Pacific halibut caught in the bottom trawl fishery, pending input from the Groundfish Management Team. All vessels will be required to use best handling practices for the model to be applied, or a default rate of 90 percent will be used.



*Astoria trawlers. Photo:  
Joseph Novak, Flickr  
Creative Commons.*

For the non-whiting midwater trawl fishery, discard mortality rates will depend on “optimized” vs. “maximized” retention. Under optimized retention, a vessel is allowed to discard certain species and must discard prohibited species such as salmon and halibut; under maximized retention a vessel must retain all catch and land it. When a vessel declares optimized retention, a default rate of 90 percent will be applied to all halibut that are discarded. When a vessel declares maximized retention, the halibut must be landed and a discard mortality rate of 100 percent will be applied.

Discard mortality rate modeling was intended to be used for Pacific halibut individual bycatch quota accounting under the catch share program. However, the information may also be used by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program when developing the annual total mortality estimates for submission to International Pacific Halibut Commission.

#### *Discard Species List Adjustment*

A Discard Species List provides participants with a list of electronically-identifiable fish that can be discarded by the fishermen. It may be necessary to adjust the list quickly based on industry feedback or advances in fish id technology. The Council chose to allow a species to be added or removed under an inseason action during a single Council meeting. Vessel monitoring plans would be updated to reflect the change.

#### *Third-Party Video Review*

Regarding review of electronic monitoring data, the Council decided that Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) and other eligible entities may compete as a video review provider for the fishing industry. NMFS has informed the Council that PSMFC cannot be used indefinitely as a sole provider for the industry to conduct the video reviews. PSMFC may compete for contracts as a third-party video provider for the industry or act on behalf of NMFS to audit or track compliance of third-party video review providers, but not both at the same time.

The Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy and Technical Committees will begin developing draft business rules for a third-party review model, including the level of video review necessary to audit logbooks and to audit video review providers, as well as decision points for changing the level of video review based on compliance and other factors.

#### *Electronic Monitoring Costs*

The Council asked the Executive Director to explore opportunities to create a designated funding mechanism for electronic monitoring to help offset monitoring costs, similar to that

used by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council as authorized in Section 313 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

## **CATCH SHARE COST RECOVERY TO BE ADDRESSED IN APRIL**

Council and NMFS staff recently discussed ways to address transparency concerns about the annual trawl catch share cost recovery report. In November, NMFS reported on that meeting and the Council asked that constituents meet with NMFS to further discuss their concerns and ways the concerns might be addressed. Cost recovery will next be addressed by the Council under the NMFS report at its April 2018 meeting.

The trawl catch share program requires that fees be charged for cost recovery. As part of this, the Council has an ongoing role in reviewing cost recovery levels. Cost recovery fees were first charged starting in 2014.



NOAA Groundfish survey.  
Photo: NOAA

## **FINAL ACTION TAKEN ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS FOR 2017 AND 2018**

The Council considered the most recent data on fishery performance and recommended NMFS implement the following adjustments for 2018 fisheries, intended to increase attainment of the annual catch limits.

**FINAL  
ACTION**

Trip limits for big skate fisheries in the shorebased individual fishing quota program are as follows: for Period 1, 5,000 lbs; Period 2, 30,000 lbs; Period 3, 35,000 lbs; Period 4, 40,000 lbs; Period 5, 15,000 lbs; and Period 6, 5,000 lbs. In addition, the Council recommended that NMFS clarify that the limited entry and open access trip limits for big skate are unlimited.

Trip limits for fixed gear sablefish fisheries north of 36° N. latitude are as follows for Periods 1-6: For the limited entry sector, 1,100 lbs per week, not to exceed 3,300 lbs/2 mo; for the open access sector, 300 lbs/day, or 1 landing per week up to 1,000 lbs, not to exceed 2,000 lbs/2 mo.

Trip limits for lingcod north of 40° 10' N. latitude are as follows: for limited entry for January-April, 600 lb/2 months; for May-October, 1400 lbs/2 months; for November, 700 lbs, for December, 400 lbs. For open access for January-April, 300 lb per month; for May through November, 700 lb per month; for December, 300 lb.

The Council also recommended that NMFS establish a 1,500 mt deduction from the 2018 Pacific whiting set total allowable catch to account for Pacific whiting mortality in research and pink shrimp fisheries. Finally, the Council recommended NMFS modify the 2018 EFP terms and conditions of the San Francisco Community Fishing Association & Dan Platt to allow for canary rockfish to be sold, given that the stock is rebuilt.

## *Salmon and Halibut*

### **SACRAMENTO WINTER CHINOOK CONTROL RULE RECOMMENDED**

In November, the Council recommended that NMFS consider use of a new control rule for Sacramento River winter Chinook as an Endangered Species Act consultation standard. The control rule restricts impact rates south of Point Arena, California. The new control rule uses forecasted (age-3) abundance, rather than past year average, to make it more responsive to current circumstances. Under the

**FINAL  
ACTION**



## Salmon Preseason Management Schedule

Nov 14-20, 2017	Council meeting. Changes to salmon methodologies discussed.
Jan 16-19, 2018	Salmon Technical Team (STT) meets in Portland to draft 2017 Review of Ocean Salmon Fisheries. Available mid-February.
Feb 20-23	STT meets in Portland to complete Preseason I Stock Abundance Analysis. Provides abundance estimates for 2018. Available early March.
Feb. 26-March 5	State and tribal agencies hold meetings to review preseason forecast and range of options.
March 8-14	Council meeting in Rohnert Park, California. Council adopts alternatives for 2018 fisheries for public review. Also addresses Inseason issues for fisheries opening before May 1.
March 15-21	STT completes Preseason Report II (proposed alternatives). Available late March.
March 15-31	Agencies, tribes, and public develop final recommendations for alternatives. North of Cape Falcon forum meetings held.
March 22	Preseason Report II available.
March 26-27	Tentative sites and dates of public hearings: Westport Washington (March 26), Coos Bay, Oregon (March 26), Salinas, California (March 27).
April 4-11	Council meets to adopt final measures in Portland, Oregon.
April 12-19	STT, Council staff complete Preseason Report III (analysis of adopted measures).
April 20	Preseason Report III available.
May 1	NMFS implements Federal ocean salmon fishing regulations.

recommended control rule, the allowable impact rates would be capped at 20 percent when the forecasted age-3 abundance is 3,000 or more. When age-3 abundance is less than 3,000, the impact rate decreases as forecast abundance decreases; the allowable impact rate does not go to zero until abundance falls to zero. The recommended control rule strikes a balance between conservation and fishery objectives.

The Council developed an ad hoc workgroup in 2015 that was tasked with exploring and evaluating alternative fishery management frameworks for Sacramento River Winter Chinook. The council-adopted control rule is the culmination of years of collaborative work involving rigorous scientific review, multi-agency policy considerations, and periodic public input.

If approved by NMFS, the new consultation standard is expected to be in place for 2018 ocean salmon fisheries. The Council recommended the new control rule be reviewed five years after it is implemented.

## PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN: FINAL ACTION FOR 2018

In November, the Council adopted final changes to the 2018 Catch Sharing Plan and annual fishing regulations for Area 2A as follows:

**FINAL ACTION**

Continue to manage the North Coast, South Coast and Puget Sound subareas under a common season with status quo management, where each subarea has its own quota and is managed to remain within that individual quota.

Each subarea will be open on Friday May 11, Sunday May 13, Friday May 25, Sunday May 27, Thursday June 7, Saturday June 9, Saturday June 16, Thursday June 21, Saturday June 23, Thursday June 28, and Saturday June 30 unless the individual quota for that subarea has been reached.

The catch sharing calculations for incidental halibut retention in the sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis will be revised so that when the Area 2A total allowable catch is less than 1.5 million pounds, the status quo formula would apply up to a maximum allocation of 50,000 lbs. When the Area 2A total allowable catch allocation is 1.5 million pounds or more, the maximum allocation would increase to 70,000 lbs.

The annual bag limit will be four fish per angler.

For the Columbia River subarea, the days open for the all-depth fishery will be Thursday, Friday, and Sunday (three days).

No changes were adopted for the Oregon Central Coast Subarea, consistent with the recommendations of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Council-adopted recommendations Area 2A in 2018 will be presented to the International Pacific Halibut Commission at their annual meeting in January.

## **SALMON METHODOLOGY REVIEW**

The Council adopted a technical revision to the Marine Survival Index of the Oregon Coastal Natural coho harvest matrix, which reduced the number of life-cycle monitoring sites used to forecast marine survival from six to five due to ODFW budget reductions.



*Albacore tuna, Honolulu fish auction. Photo: Jennifer Gilden.*

## *Highly Migratory Species*

### **INTERNATIONAL ALBACORE, BLUEFIN TUNA STRATEGY DISCUSSED**

*North Pacific Albacore Management Strategy Evaluation Stakeholder's Workshop*

In October, the International Scientific Committee (ISC) for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean sponsored the Third North Pacific Albacore Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Stakeholder Workshop in Vancouver, British Columbia. Highly Migratory Species Management Team member Cyreis Schmitt, Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel member Douglas Fricke and Council staff Kit

Dahl attended on behalf of the Council. Celia Barroso, who is also a management team member, attended on behalf of NMFS. Other ISC participants hailed from Canada, Japan, and Chinese-Taipei (Taiwan), along with staff from the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and nongovernmental organizations.

Workshop participants reviewed and commented on the initial set of management objectives identified at a 2016 workshop and developed a range of harvest strategies (including acceptable levels of risk, biological reference points, and harvest control rules), which will be tested in the MSE. Preliminary results of the MSE will be presented to the ISC, IATTC and WCPFC Northern Committee in 2018. A fourth stakeholder workshop is proposed for 2019.

#### *Permanent Advisory Committee Meeting*

The Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC) to the U.S. Section to the WCPFC also met in October. The PAC advises the U.S. Section to the WCPFC (commissioners and representatives of the Department of State) on the development of U.S. policies, positions, and negotiating strategies. Dorothy Lowman attended in her capacity as a WCPFC Commissioner, and Dr. Kit Dahl attended as an *ex officio* member on behalf of the Council.

PAC recommendations fed into positions taken by the U.S. at the WCPFC meeting held

December 3-7, 2017. A “bridging” conservation and management measure for tropical tunas was adopted; the current measure expires at the end of 2017. In addition, the WCPFC adopted a rebuilding plan for Pacific bluefin tuna and associated changes to the conservation and management measure proposed by the Northern Committee.

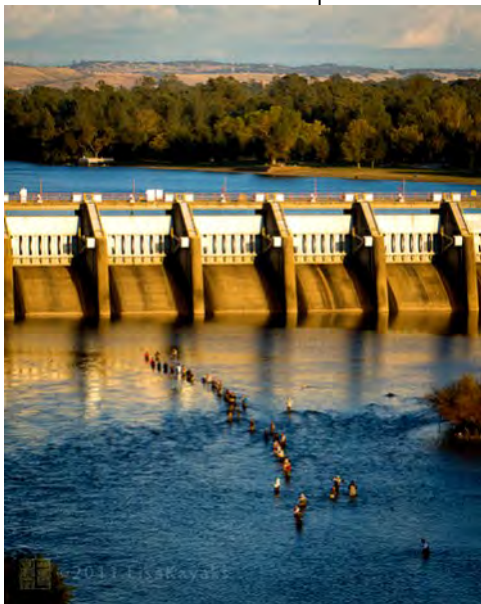
#### *2018 Trip Limits for Pacific Bluefin Tuna*

In November, the Council endorsed NMFS-proposed trip limits for Pacific bluefin tuna commercial landings in 2018. A 1 mt trip limit would apply to all fisheries except for the large mesh drift gillnet fishery, which would be subject to a 2 mt trip limit. These limits would prevent rapid attainment of the low 2018 catch limit of approximately 120 mt while minimizing regulatory discards due to unavoidable incidental catch on a single trip.

### **DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS RECOMMENDED**

The Council reviewed two revised applications for deep-set buoy gear exempted fishing permits (EFPs). The applicants want to expand their proposed fishing activity to include linked buoy gear in addition to the standard deep-set buoy gear configuration. The Council recommended NMFS revise their permit conditions to allow the use of linked gear.

The Council asked three applicants to submit revised applications with information on how they would address data gaps, and recommended that NMFS approve an additional EFP. For details, see [Agenda Item F8](#) in the November briefing book.



*Fishing on the American River below the Nimbus Dam. Photo: Lisa Ouellette, Flickr Creative Commons.*

### *Other Business*

#### **COUNCIL WRITES LETTERS ON CALIFORNIA WATER, ESA BILLS**

The Council recently received a request from Reps. Calvert and Panetta to comment on HR 3916 (the FISH Act), which would transfer jurisdiction for anadromous fish under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) from NMFS to the Dept. of Interior. In its response, the Council noted that NMFS and the Council have a good working relationship in regard to ESA-listed fish, that a transfer of jurisdiction over ESA-listed fish would lead to inefficiencies and delays, and that there is no current problem that would be solved by the legislation. The letter is posted with other Council correspondence at [tinyurl.com/y8cuS4yb](http://tinyurl.com/y8cuS4yb).

The Council also sent a requested letter to California Reps. Huffman and Thomson commenting on HR 23, the Gaining Responsibility on Water Act, which, if passed, would have a major impact on California salmon and salmon fisheries. The letter outlines ten areas of concern regarding the legislation, most relating to lack of water for anadromous fish and reversal of existing California water laws.

In response to several Congressional requests, Council staff are currently drafting comments on several bills that propose to reauthorize or amend the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the main bill that determines how ocean fisheries are managed in the United States. Currently, four bills have been introduced to amend the Act. Finally, the Council is also tracking a bill on Columbia River hydropower operations (HR 3144, McMorris-Rodgers, Washington), which would have the effect of reducing Court-ordered spill in the Columbia hydropower system.



## MEMBERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

The Council reviewed and approved the following appointments: **Sarah Nayani** was appointed to the trawl at-large seat on the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel formerly held by **Brent Paine**.

**Trung Nguyen** was appointed to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife seat on the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team formerly held by **Chelsea Protasio**.

**Dr. Derek Dapp** was appointed to fill the current Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife vacancy on the Highly Migratory Species Management Team.

**Jeff Lackey** was appointed to the Community Advisory Board seat formerly held by **Brad Pettinger**.

Additionally, **Caren Braby** was appointed as the Council's representative on the West Coast Regional Planning Body. **Michele Culver** formerly held this role and will continue as a Council designee.

## FISCAL MATTERS

The Council approved a provisional calendar year 2018 budget of \$4,980,814, which includes hosting a [meeting of the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee](#) of the Council Coordination Committee in January. The Council also tasked the Executive Director with pursuing additional funding for special projects not covered by base-level funding. The Council is scheduled to adopt a final CY 2018 operational budget at its June 2018 meeting.

## Upcoming Meetings

### AREA 2A PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGERS COORDINATION MEETING WEBINAR

Dates: January 3  
Purpose: To prepare and develop recommendations for the January 22-26, 2018 International Pacific Halibut Commission's (IPHC) annual meeting in Portland.  
Contact: Robin Ehlke ([Robin.Ehlke@noaa.gov](mailto:Robin.Ehlke@noaa.gov))  
For More Info: <http://tinyurl.com/ybuelkv8>

### SIXTH NATIONAL MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COORDINATION SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL COORDINATION COMMITTEE (SCS6)

Dates: January 17-19, 2018  
Location: Kona Kai Hotel, San Diego, California  
Contact: John DeVore ([John.DeVore@noaa.gov](mailto:John.DeVore@noaa.gov))  
For More Info: [tinyurl.com/scs2018](http://tinyurl.com/scs2018)

### HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM

Dates: January 22-24 2018  
Location: Glenn Anderson Federal Building, Long Beach, California  
Contact: Kit Dahl ([Kit.Dahl@noaa.gov](mailto:Kit.Dahl@noaa.gov))  
For More Info: [tinyurl.com/y84b59bn](http://tinyurl.com/y84b59bn)

### NOAA ACOUSTIC TRAWL SURVEY METHODOLOGY REVIEW

Dates: January 29-February 2, 2018  
Location: NOAA Southwest Fishery Science Center, La Jolla, California  
Contact: Kerry Griffin ([Kerry.Griffin@noaa.gov](mailto:Kerry.Griffin@noaa.gov))

## MARCH COUNCIL MEETING

Dates: March 8-14, 2018

Location: Doubletree Hilton Sonoma, Rohnert Park

For More Info: <http://tinyurl.com/ybqr9j65>

### *March Council Meeting Agenda (Rohnert Park, California)*

#### **GROUND FISH**

- ◆ Gear Switching and Trawl Sablefish Area Management
- ◆ Whiting Treaty Implementation
- ◆ Stock Assessment Plan
- ◆ Endangered Species Act Biological Opinion on Salmon
- ◆ Catch Share Review Follow-On Actions
- ◆ Inseason Adjustments and Exempted Fishing Permit Check-In
- ◆ Update on 2019-2020 Harvest Spex & Management Measures

#### **COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES**

- ◆ NMFS Report
- ◆ 2018 Exempted Fishing Permits: Notice of Intent
- ◆ Methodology Review: Preliminary Topic Selection

#### **SALMON/HALIBUT**

- ◆ Review of 2017 Salmon Fisheries and Summary of 2018 Stock Forecasts
- ◆ 2018 Salmon Management Alternatives
- ◆ Annual International Pacific Halibut Commission Meeting Report
- ◆ Incidental Catch Limits for Halibut

#### **OTHER**

- ◆ Council Coordination Committee Update
- ◆ Marine Planning Update

#### **HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM**

- ◆ California Current Ecosystem and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Reports
- ◆ Fishery Ecosystem Plan Climate Shift Initiative
- ◆ Highly Migratory Species
- ◆ Exempted Fishing Permits
- ◆ Deep-Set Buoy Gear Authorization: Preliminary Preferred Alternative
- ◆ Habitat