

## COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON 2018 EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS (EFPs) – FINAL ACTION

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) reviewed the revised applications for exempted fishing permits (EFP) for 2018 from the California Wetfish Producers Association (CWPA) (Agenda Item C.2. Attachment 1) and the West Coast Pelagic Conservation Group (Agenda Item C.2. Attachment 2). Both applications are seeking exemptions from any potential restrictions on directed fishing for Pacific Sardine (sardine) during the 2018-2019 Pacific Sardine fishing year.

At its June 2017 meeting, the Council conditionally approved the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) / CWPA aerial survey methodology for use in future CPS stock assessments, consistent with recommendations contained in the Southern California Coastal Pelagic Species Aerial Survey Methodology Review report (Agenda Item D.2, Attachment 1, June 2017). The purpose of the EFP application from CWPA (Agenda Item C.2. Attachment 1) in 2018 is to conduct fishing to address issues identified in the aerial survey methodology review. Their proposed research project intends to sample CPS schools with qualified purse seine vessels chartered to capture a subset of the schools identified and photo-documented by aerial spotter pilots. The pilots will also conduct nearshore surveys to address uncertainties of CPS abundances in nearshore waters where large National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) survey vessels are unable to sample. Survey dates are proposed for seven days in late August, 2018. Point sets will be taken on CPS schools identified by pilots. The sardines harvested within this EFP will not exceed a total of 600 mt. All sardines harvested will count towards the EFP limit. Sets will be subsampled for biological information and the catch sold to offset costs of the research program.

The West Coast Pelagic Conservation Group EFP is requesting to continue and expand the collaborative effort, which began in 2017 to provide supplementary nearshore data on species composition and individual fish metrics through purse seine operations coordinated with the 2018 Southwest Fisheries Science Center summer acoustic trawl survey. The purse seine sets are not proposed for harvest for commercial processing and no more than 10 mt of Pacific Sardine will be taken for scientific information. Industry sampling in the Pacific Northwest is expected to span nearshore waters that would otherwise not be surveyed, from the Canadian-Washington border to the Oregon-California border in summer of 2018 concurrent with NOAA surveys in the area.

The CPSMT recognizes the value of the EFP research proposed by both groups to improve CPS stock assessments by obtaining data that has not been attainable by other means. Both EFPs address high priority research needs to produce better estimates of biomass. The CPSMT supports the applications and a Council recommendation to National Marine Fisheries Service to issue the exempted fishing permits. The CPSMT commends the applicants on their continuing efforts to develop and improve methods to measure the biomass and distribution of CPS.