

Pacific Council News

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Groundfish

2019–2020 Groundfish Management Measures Adopted

In June, the Council adopted final harvest specifications and management measures for 2019 and 2020 groundfish fisheries as follows:

The Council adopted a new rebuilding plan for yelloweye rockfish that specifies a spawning potential ratio (SPR) harvest rate of 65 percent; 2019 and 2020 annual catch limits (ACLs) of 48 mt and 49 mt, respectively; and a target rebuilding year of 2029. The non-trawl sectors will be managed using annual catch targets based on the lower harvest rate (SPR = 70 percent) analyzed under Alternative 1 with the associated management measures predicted to stay within those lower ACLs.

FINAL ACTION

The Council confirmed the preliminary preferred alternative for routine management measures with revised estimates of off-the-top deductions to accommodate groundfish catch in tribal, research, and non-groundfish fisheries, set-asides for approved EFPs, and set-asides for at-sea whiting fisheries as recommended by the [Groundfish Management Team](#). The Council also confirmed their preliminary preferred alternative for two-year sector allocations and commercial trip limits for all stocks with revised trip limits for sablefish north of 36° N. latitude and lingcod north of 40°10' N. latitude for limited entry as recommended by the [Groundfish Advisory Subpanel](#). The Council adopted the recreational management measures under Alternative 1 recommended by [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), [Oregon](#)

This newsletter reports on decisions made at the June 2018 Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting held in Spokane, Washington. The Pacific 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 September 2018 Council meeting will be held in Seattle, Washington; the public comment deadline for the meeting is 5 p.m. on August 9. The supplemental public comment deadline is 5 p.m. on August 27. Please email comments to pfmc.comments@noaa.gov. [Sign up for other notices here.](#)

Pacific Fishery Management Council

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[Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), and [Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), as well as the treaty tribal management measures recommended by the [tribes](#).

The Council adopted the following new management measures for groundfish fisheries: new salmon mitigation measures, the preliminary preferred alternative for new stock complexes with the specification of harvest guidelines for the stocks in the new Oregon complexes, elimination of daily vessel limits in the individual fishing quota (IFQ) trawl fishery, new sablefish and lingcod discard mortality rates for the IFQ trawl fishery, continuation of the Adaptive Management Pass-Through in the IFQ trawl fishery, removal of automatic authority to close at-sea whiting fisheries if darkblotched rockfish or Pacific ocean perch set-asides are exceeded, allowance to fish shoreward of the 40 fm line in the Western Cowcod Conservation Area by commercial and recreational fixed gear fisheries, and Alternative 1 for lingcod retention in the salmon troll fishery as recommended and analyzed by [Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife](#).

Stock Assessment List Adopted

In June, the Council adopted the list of stock assessments for 2019 and 2021 as presented in the table on page 9. The 2021 list will be refined in 2020. The Council also adopted terms of reference for rebuilding analyses, methodology reviews, and (provisionally) stock assessments (final adoption of this terms of reference is scheduled for September). The Council also adopted the 2019 stock assessment review schedule proposed by [NMFS](#).

Exempted Fishing Permits Approved

In June, the Council approved three exempted fishing permits (EFPs) for final recommendation to NMFS. EFPs allows exemptions from some regulations in order to study the effectiveness, bycatch rate, or other aspects of an experimental fishing gear.



Yellowtail Rockfish Jig Fishing for the 2019-2020 Fishing Season: This EFP was submitted by the San Francisco Community Fishing Association in order to test the potential for a new commercial jig gear configuration to harvest currently underutilized rockfish species (yellowtail) while avoiding overfished stocks. [More details here.](#)

Commercial Midwater Hook-and-Line Rockfish Fishing in the RCA off the Oregon Coast: This EFP was submitted by Scott Cook of Coos Bay, Oregon, to test a modified, midwater trolled longline gear configuration for selective commercial harvest of underutilized midwater rockfish species within the Fixed Gear Rockfish Conservation Area while avoiding rebuilding yelloweye rockfish. [More details here.](#)

Monterey Bay Regional Exempted Fishing Permit – Chilipepper Rockfish. This EFP was submitted by Really Good Fish, a community-support fishery in Moss Landing, to test a trolled hook-and-line gear type to target chilipepper rockfish, including the use of electronic monitoring. [More details here.](#)

One EFP was not approved for final recommendation to NMFS: Chilipepper/ Yellowtail Long Leader Exempted Fishing Permit.

Additionally, the Council was presented with a new application for a Year-Round Coastwide Midwater Rockfish submitted by the West Coast Seafood Processors Association, Oregon Trawl Commission, Environmental Defense Fund, and Midwater Trawlers Cooperative. This EFP was forwarded for public review and comment, with a final recommendation scheduled September. The purpose of the EFP is to provide the opportunity for vessels to use midwater gear to target rockfish coastwide year-round during 2019 and 2020. The EFP will collect information to determine the nature and extent of bycatch of salmon and other species of concern while

targeting widow, yellowtail, chilipepper and other rockfish species without existing gear/time/area restrictions. Additionally, to the degree that provisions of the gear rule have not been implemented by 2019, the EFP would continue the gear-related provisions that were contained in the 2018 midwater trawl/gear EFP. The gear rule is intended to provide more flexibility in the use of trawl gear for participants in the groundfish trawl catch share program. [More details here.](#)

Groundfish Inseason Adjustments

The Council and made no inseason adjustments to 2018 fisheries in June.

As part of adopting the final EFPs, the Council also specified set-aside amounts, as [recommended by the GMT](#), except that it reduced the amount of canary for the Oregon coast EFP from 10 mt to 5 mt. The EFPs will be forwarded to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for implementation in the next biennial management cycle.

Coastal Pelagic Species

Council Begins Discussion of Live Bait Policy



Pacific sardines (NOAA)

In June, the Council initiated a fishery management plan amendment process to address take in the coastal pelagic species (CPS) live bait fishery when a stock is overfished. The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team will develop a range of alternatives for consideration in September, with final action scheduled for November.

The live bait fishery is centered in Central and Southern California, with some activity off Oregon and Washington. The sector is particularly important to the California charter and sport boat fleet, and some commercial fisheries. Currently, the CPS fishery management plan does not require a limited entry permit for live bait fishing, and all live bait landings are counted as harvest. The total annual live bait harvest is approximately 2,000 metric tons.

If a CPS stock becomes overfished, the live bait fishery is then limited to 15 percent incidental landings. For example, if sardines were to become overfished, a CPS vessel could not catch pure loads of sardine. It would have to target a different species, such as anchovy, that could have no more than 15 percent of sardines mixed in. Due to concerns that this incidental landing limit makes it very difficult to prosecute the live bait fishery, the Council will consider alternatives to managing harvest in the live bait fishery, in overfished conditions.

Highly Migratory Species

Council Opposes Bluefin Tuna Catch Limit Increase

In June, the Council recommended that the U.S. oppose any proposals to increase catch limits for Pacific bluefin tuna at the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and Western

and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee.

In August, the IATTC will be negotiating a new measure for Pacific bluefin management in the eastern Pacific ocean for 2019 and beyond, and will meet to discuss long-term Pacific bluefin management with the Joint Working Group of the Northern Committee. In both of these forums there will likely be pressure to increase catch limits because of a recent increase in recruitment resulting in more optimistic projections of stock rebuilding. However, the Council notes these projection results result from a single year of increased recruitment, so it is still highly uncertain that rebuilding targets can be met.



Bluefin tuna (NOAA)

The Council also noted new permitting requirements for U.S. vessels intending to fish in Canadian waters during the 2018 albacore season starting on June 15. The Council asked NMFS to work with the Canadian government and keep stakeholders informed to resolve any impediments to access.

In other news, management strategy evaluations (MSEs) for North Pacific albacore and Pacific bluefin tuna are underway or planned by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean. An MSE is a tool that scientists and managers can use to simulate the workings of a fisheries system and allow them to test whether potential harvest strategies—or management procedures—can achieve management objectives. MSEs are becoming an integral

component of the fishery management process, helping to determine the harvest strategy likely to perform best, regardless of uncertainty, and balance trade-offs amongst competing management objectives. For more information, see [NMFS's report on its recent MSE public listening session](#).

Exempted Fishing Permits Discussed

Deep-Set Buoy Gear Recommendations Forwarded

On May 1, NMFS approved 51 standard deep-set buoy gear EFPs for targeting swordfish off California and Oregon. Although issuing these EFPs depends on applicants meeting certain eligibility requirements, there is a good chance a larger number of vessels will be testing the gear this summer. NMFS also anticipates issuing up to 15 linked deep-set buoy gear vessel EFPs once required environmental reviews have been completed. If all goes well, these permittees could be on the water this summer too. In June, the Council reviewed one resubmitted application, from Mr. David Hutto, and recommended NMFS issue him a permit. For the time being the Council isn't accepting any new applications for deep-set buoy gear.

While a large number of permittees could be fishing with deep-set buoy gear in the near future, so far only two EFP recipients have used the gear. Five to seven vessels have been fishing under the Pflieger Institute of Environmental Research (PIER) EFP since 2015. Dr. Chuguey Sepulveda from PIER updated the Council on results to date. A total of 743 sets were made through 2017 with 7,300 individual pieces of gear deployed. Gear loss has proven to be very low, with only one piece lost across all these sets. Catch rates increased over the three June-to-January fishing seasons, and swordfish has comprised an increasing proportion of total catch, accounting for 93% in the 2017 season. Bigeye thresher shark, a marketable species, accounted for most of the remainder of the catch. Only one protected species, an elephant seal, was hooked over the three years, and it was released alive in good condition. The other EFP recipients, Timothy and Laura

Perguson, made four sets in 2017 but didn't catch any swordfish.

"Short set" longline

Dr. John Hall submitted [an EFP application](#) to test short (≤ 5 nm) deep-set pelagic longline gear within the West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone. The Council approved this application for public review, with the provision that if the EFP is issued this activity should not occur off the coast of Washington. A final Council recommendation is expected in September.

Deep-Set Buoy Gear Fishery Planning



Since March 2016, the Council has been developing a range of alternatives to authorize a fishery using deep-set buoy gear. At the Council's request, in June the Highly Migratory Species Management Team presented [an analysis](#) (and [supplementary information](#)) to help the Council determine the appropriate number of limited entry permits to issue for vessels operating in the Southern California Bight (limited entry would apply to the area east of a line extending due south from Point Conception). The analysis addressed concerns about potential crowding, gear conflict, and the effect of increased supply of swordfish to what is a niche, high value market.

Recognizing the difficulty in determining the ideal number of participants in an as yet undeveloped fishery, the Council revised the range of options for the number of permits and how they would be issued under the limited entry

alternative. Under the revised range of options, the Council could issue an initial number of permits, with more issued in subsequent years, up to 300 permits. The current options address whether to issue up to 50 permits per year, up to 100 permits per year, or to issue all 300 permits in one year. This "phase-in" approach would allow the Council to proceed cautiously to reach a level that best meets management objectives.

Council Reviews Swordfish Fishery Monitoring, Management Plan

In June, the Council reviewed the [draft Swordfish Monitoring and Management Plan](#), which it last considered in September 2015. The plan articulates objectives for the west coast swordfish fishery, reviews the status of current and potential fishing methods, and outlines various fishery monitoring and mitigation strategies. The Council anticipates reviewing a revision of the draft plan at its September meeting and intends to finalize the plan once further progress is made on some of the proposed plan activities.

Increased monitoring of the California large mesh drift gillnet (DGN) fishery is one of the measures described in the plan. In 2015, the Council proposed moving to 100% monitoring of the fishery in connection with its proposal to set protected species "hard caps" for the fishery. After review, NMFS decided not to implement the hard cap proposal and asked the Council to reconsider increased monitoring of the DGN fishery absent a need connected to managing with hard caps. With some modifications, the Council reaffirmed its preferred alternative for DGN fishery monitoring, which is to achieve 30% monitoring coverage through a combination of human observers and electronic monitoring, and to work toward monitoring all vessels. The Council will continue to consider its proposal based on progress NMFS makes on developing monitoring methods, including electronic monitoring, for the fishery.

The Council also considered another element of its DGN monitoring strategy—performance standards covering various marine mammal, turtle, and finfish species. The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) recommended that performance metrics be based on a

Swordfish at surface caught using deep-set buoy gear. Photo by Ralph Pace, PIER

[new bycatch estimation methodology](#); the Council requested its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) review the new methodology and determine if it represents the best scientific information available. Based on SSC and HMSMT advice, the Council will consider changing the performance metrics at a future meeting.



A NOAA researcher takes a sample of a flounder (NOAA)

Administrative

NMFS Provides Update on “Best Scientific Information Available”

In June, the Council was briefed by NMFS on a proposed policy for determining best scientific information available for stock assessments, establishing reference points, and making status determinations.

The Council is concerned about delays in these determinations, especially in salmon management, where analyses are used immediately to inform Council management decisions. The Council also recommended that the NMFS representative who is present during

Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) deliberations on this topic not be a member of the SSC to ensure that members remain objective reviewers of new science. Finally, the Council asked NMFS to clarify how “best scientific information available” determinations will be made in the various international processes. The Council will develop a letter to NMFS this summer forwarding its comments and concerns.

Research and Data Needs Document Adopted

The [draft 2018 Research and Data Needs document](#) was adopted for public review in June, and will incorporate [comments from the Council’s Ecosystem Workgroup](#). The Council is currently soliciting comments on research and data needs priorities. Comments should be sent to the Council by the August 9 briefing book deadline (pfmc.comments@noaa.gov).

The Council also requested public notice on the need to maintain long-term databases that are used in assessments and other analyses.

The Council’s research and data needs document is updated about every five years. Final adoption of the 2018 Research and Data Needs document is scheduled for September.

Appointments

Dorothy Lowman, David Crabbe, and Buzz Brizendine left the Council in June after serving their maximum three terms on the Council.

Phil Anderson was elected as Council Chair and **Marc Gorelnik** as Vice-Chair for the August 11, 2018 through August 10, 2019 term.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service revised their list of Council designees, adding **Roy Elicker, Dr. Kyle Hanson, Roger Root, and John Netto**. **Dr. Denise Hawkins** and **Michael Clarke** will continue as designees.

The Council approved the following appointments: **Jon Carey** was appointed to the NMFS West Coast Region seat on the Salmon Technical Team currently held **Larrie LaVoy** on an interim basis until the SSC can review this appointment.

August Felando has resigned his Purse Seine seat on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel. The Council Chair will work with the California contingent to appoint an interim representative before the September Council meeting for the remainder of Felando's three-year term, which ends December 31, 2018.

Dr. Tommy Moore was appointed to the tribal seat on the Ad Hoc Ecosystem Workgroup.

Council member **Rich Lincoln** was appointed as an alternate United States Commissioner to the North Pacific Fisheries Commission and will represent the Council at the Commission's fourth annual session in early-July of this year in Tokyo. **Dorothy Lowman** will continue to represent the Council on the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Upcoming Meetings

Salmon Technical Team Rebuilding Plan Work Session (Strait of Juan de Fuca Natural Coho)

Dates: June 26, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Purpose: To begin developing salmon rebuilding plans for Strait of Juan de Fuca natural coho.
Location: NOAA West Coast Region Office, Room 261, Lacey, WA
Contact: Robin Ehlke (robin.ehlke@noaa.gov)
For More Info: <https://tinyurl.com/y7jg6mhs>

Salmon Technical Team Rebuilding Plan Work Session (Queets River Natural Coho)

Dates: June 27, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Purpose: To begin developing salmon rebuilding plans for Queets River natural coho.
Location: Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Olympia, WA
Contact: Robin Ehlke (robin.ehlke@noaa.gov)
For More Info: <https://tinyurl.com/y7jg6mhs>

Salmon Technical Team Rebuilding Plan Work Session (Snohomish River Natural Coho)

Dates: June 28, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Purpose: To begin developing salmon rebuilding plans for Snohomish River natural coho.
Location: Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Olympia, WA
Contact: Robin Ehlke (robin.ehlke@noaa.gov)
For More Info: <https://tinyurl.com/y7jg6mhs>

Ad Hoc Sablefish Management and Trawl Allocation Committee

Dates: June 29, 8 a.m. until business for the day is completed
Purpose: To begin developing salmon rebuilding plans for Snohomish River natural coho.
Location: Watertown Hotel, Seattle, WA
Contact: Jim Seger (jim.seger@noaa.gov)
For More Info: <https://tinyurl.com/y89ytw4>

September Council Meeting

Dates: September 5-12, 2018

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport, Seattle, Washington

September Council Meeting Agenda (Seattle)

Groundfish

- ◆ Methodology review—preliminary topic selection
- ◆ Catch share follow-on actions: preliminary preferred alternative
- ◆ Endangered Species Act Consultation on Eulachon
- ◆ Groundfish stock assessment terms of reference
- ◆ Continuing midwater trawl and gear exempted fishing permit and salmon bycatch provisions in new exempted fishing permits: final recommendations
- ◆ Omnibus workload planning
- ◆ Inseason adjustments
- ◆ Science improvements report
- ◆ Essential fish habitat/Rockfish Conservation Area Implementation update (Amendment 28)

Highly Migratory Species

- ◆ International management recommendations
- ◆ Biennial management measures
- ◆ Final recommendations on non-deep-set buoy gear exempted fishing permits
- ◆ Swordfish monitoring and management plan update

Highly Migratory Species, cont'd

- ◆ Drift gillnet performance metrics methodology

Ecosystem

- ◆ West Coast ecosystem-based fishery management roadmap implementation plan
- ◆ Fishery Ecosystem Plan five year review scoping
- ◆ Climate and Communities Initiative update

Other

- ◆ Electronic monitoring program update
- ◆ Legislative issues (tentative)
- ◆ Habitat issues
- ◆ Final adoption of Research and Data Needs document

Coastal Pelagic Species

- ◆ Live bait fishery allowance (Amendment 17)

Salmon

- ◆ Methodology review—final topic selection
- ◆ Update on rebuilding plans

Halibut

- ◆ Catch Sharing Plan—preliminary changes

List of 2019 and 2021 Groundfish Stock Assessments (see story, page 2)

2019 Stock Assessments	
Longnose skate, big skate, cabezon (CA and OR), Cowcod, gopher rockfish/ black-and-yellow rockfish (as a complex), sablefish	Full assessment
Petrале sole, widow rockfish	Stock assessment update
Lingcod, canary rockfish, black rockfish	Catch-only projection (harvest specification and depletion projections from the last assessment are updated with actual catches rather than assumed catches)
Yelloweye rockfish	Catch report (actual catches are analyzed relative to specified annual catch limits)
2021 Stock Assessments	
Dover sole, Vermilion rockfish (in a complex with sunset rockfish), brown rockfish, copper rockfish, black rockfish, bank rockfish, Yellowtail south of 40°10' N lat., Petrале sole, yelloweye rockfish, lingcod	Full assessment
Pacific cod	Full, data-moderate, or data-poor assessment (to be determined based on data availability)
Sablefish	Stock assessment update
Arrowtooth flounder, Yellowtail rockfish north of 40°10' N lat., canary rockfish	Catch-only projection

Pacific Council members and other members of the Council family at the June 2018 meeting. Council members italicized.

Top row: Todd Phillips, Council staff; Chuck Tracy, Council Executive Director, *Joanna Grebel* (CA); *David Crabbe* (CA, Vice-Chair). **Second row:** *Troy Buell* (OR), *Brad Pettinger* (OR at-large), *Rich Lincoln* (WA), *Pete Hassemer* (ID), Sandra Krause, Council staff; *LCDR Scott McGrew*, (US Coast Guard), *Michael Clark* (USFWS). **Third row down:** Mark Strom (NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center), *Herb Pollard* (ID), *Marc Gorelnik* (CA), *Kelly Ames* (NMFS), *Maggie Smith* (NOAA General Counsel), *Michele Culver* (WA), *Phil Anderson* (Chair, WA). **Front row:** *Dorothy Lowman* (OR), *Marci Yaremko* (CA), *Buzz Brizendine* (CA at-large), *Joe Oatman* (Tribal seat), *Corey Niles* (WA).



Have you ever wondered how one of these life rafts works? Click on the photo for a link to a video. Photo taken at the Clatsop Commercial Fisheries Tour in Astoria this spring. Jay Englund demonstrates.