

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON LIVE BAIT FISHERY MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) identified potential changes to the CPS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) regarding live bait fishing when a stock is in an overfished condition. As described in our first report under this agenda item, (Agenda Item C.1.a, CPSMT Report 1), the CPSMT proposed a range of alternatives for Council consideration and potential selection of a preliminary preferred alternative.

Briefly, the proposed range of alternatives includes the following, applicable when the directed fishery for a CPS finfish stock is closed due to an overfished condition:

1. Status quo (No Action)
2. Remove prescribed live bait restrictions in the CPS FMP

The CPSMT recommends adopting the range of alternatives for public review for final action scheduled for November 2018, and recommends selecting Alternative 2 as the preliminary preferred alternative.

The CPSMT supports amending the CPS FMP in order to provide the Council with the ability to set incidental catch allowances or allow directed fishing in the live bait fishery with consideration of variables such as stock status, CPS school composition, and fishery priorities during each management cycle or under a developed rebuilding plan without being restricted to predetermined limits. This action will not limit the ability of the Council to determine the appropriate catch level that will reduce mortality and discard potential to allow rebuilding, while still allowing for the potential stability for fishery operations.

If a stock assessment results in an overfished status for a stock, the stock assessment and the resulting harvest limits (eg. overfishing limit/acceptable biological catch) from the harvest control rules would undergo review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and potential harvest limits would be vetted by the SSC, CPSMT, and the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS). Under these harvest limits, the Council would then recommend appropriate management measures.

In making its recommendation, the CPSMT recognizes that this alternative does not assume that allowing directed fishing for live bait would be an appropriate management measure under all biomass levels below the overfished threshold. The Council has to date been able to account for the management uncertainty associated with the catch in this sector and remain under the annual catch limit (ACL), although certain stock sizes and associated total allowable harvest levels may not make directed harvest a feasible option with the current catch accounting in place. For example, if the Council wanted to allow directed harvest under extremely low quota levels, changes in the catch reporting of live bait harvest would have to be made. However, the CPSMT does see scenarios with the current catch uncertainty where management measures could continue to appropriately account for directed live bait harvest when a stock is in an overfished condition

and allow for rebuilding of the stock. Nonetheless, the CPSMT supports improved catch accounting, as this would better document total catch against the ACL while more fully describing fishery needs for live bait. The CPSMT is willing to work with appropriate agencies to determine more robust approaches.

PFMC
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