

# Decision Summary Document

## Pacific Fishery Management Council

March 7-12, 2019

Council Meeting Decision Summary Documents are highlights of significant decisions made at Council meetings. Results of agenda items that do not reach a level of highlight significance are typically not described in the Decision Summary Document. For a more detailed account of Council meeting discussions, see the [Council meeting record and transcripts](#) or the [Council newsletter](#).

## Ecosystem Management

### Climate and Communities Initiative Update

The Council adopted *shifting stock availability (including shifting distribution) across species, FMPs, and communities across the west coast* as the topic for a climate change scenario planning exercise.

The Council wants this scenario planning process to result in the definition of tools, products, and processes necessary to react to potential future ecosystem states resulting from climate variability and climate change.

The Council is forming a Core Team to: identify funding, facilitation, and advisory support for the scenario planning exercise; refine the topic described above; specify a detailed timeline for the scenario planning process; and identify participants in the scenario planning exercise. The Council set an objective of completing the scenario planning exercise by March 2020.

The Core Team will be composed of members of the Ad Hoc Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG), Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel, Ad Hoc Climate Scenario Investigation Team, Council staff, and National Marine Fisheries Service Fishery Science Center personnel. The Core Team will provide an update on these tasks at the September 2019 meeting, at which time the Council will specify further details of the scenario planning process.

### Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Five-Year Review

The Council directed the EWG to submit, for the September 2019 advanced briefing book, alternative descriptions of the FEP Vision (including purpose, goals, and objectives), taking into account public and advisory body comments. These alternatives should include ecosystem-level, outcome-oriented goals and objectives, and address the effects of climate change. At its September meeting, the Council is scheduled to adopt a revised FEP Vision.

Considering the revised FEP Vision purpose, goals, and objectives, along with progress on the Climate and Communities Initiative, in March 2020 the EWG will present detailed alternative proposals for revising the rest of the FEP. At that time the Council would provide guidance on any comprehensive revision of the FEP.

## Salmon Management

### **Review of 2018 Fisheries and Summary of 2019 Stock Forecasts**

The Council adopted the stock abundances, acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and overfishing limits (OFLs) as presented in the 2019 Preseason Report I, as the best available science for use in 2019 salmon management, as recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC).

### **Adopt 2019 Management Alternatives for Public Review**

The Council adopted three Alternative sets of management measures for the 2019 ocean commercial, recreational, and tribal salmon fisheries. Public hearings on the Alternatives have been scheduled in Westport, Washington and Coos Bay, Oregon for Monday, March 25 and Ukiah, California for Tuesday, March 26. The Council is scheduled to adopt final 2019 ocean salmon regulations at its April 9-16 meeting in Rohnert Park, California.

Inseason action was taken on some fisheries previously scheduled to begin in March or April. Commercial fisheries from Cape Falcon to Oregon/California border will delay the scheduled opening date of March 15 until April 20. Recreational fisheries from Horse Mountain to Pigeon Point (Fort Bragg and San Francisco management areas) will delay the scheduled opening date of April 6 until April 13.

## Groundfish Management

### **Amendment 28--Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Rockfish Conservation Area--Final Implementation**

The Council approved Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 28 [materials](#) for transmittal to NMFS and subsequent Secretarial approval. The Council took the following actions:

- Approved FMP text changes and gave direction to Council staff to incorporate specific edits as described in Council motions for transmittal for Secretarial review.
- Approved draft FMP appendices and asked Council and NMFS staff to finalize the appendices for transmittal for Secretarial review.

- Approved for public review, a new [Council Operating Procedure 22](#) (describing EFH reviews for all FMPs) scheduled for final approval at its September 2019 meeting, after all Council Advisory Bodies have an opportunity to provide comment.
- Directed the Project Team to develop a plan to survey interested individuals to gather the lessons learned and recommendations for future Groundfish EFH review procedures.
- Amended a previous motion (from April 2018) to align the [Arago Reef](#) eastern boundary with the state waters boundary.

### **New Methodology Informing Sigma Values--Final Adoption**

The Council adopted new sigma values for groundfish and coastal pelagic species stocks as recommended by the [SSC](#). This included the updated baseline sigma values and the recommended increase in sigma due to stock assessment age.

Sigma, coupled with the overfishing probability ( $P^*$ ), is used to determine ABC buffers for these species. The sigma value is intended to address the scientific uncertainty in estimating the OFL and varies by the uncertainty associated with the stock category and the age of the stock assessment.

The Council also requested that the Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers' research improved sigma estimates that may be stock-specific or related to appropriate stock groups, prior to the 2023-2024 assessment cycle.

### **Omnibus Workload Planning Process Review and Project Prioritization**

The Council adopted a new process for prioritizing new candidate groundfish management measures. Rather than going through the prioritization exercise every two years, at most Council meetings there will be a separate agenda item on new management measures, during which progress will be reported and there will be an opportunity for the public to present new candidate measures.

Based on [recommendations of the GAP](#) and a new issue identified in the [Enforcement Consultants report](#), the Council identified the following priority new management measures but did not identify the timeline for their consideration (item numbers correspond to GMT Reports [1](#), [4](#), and [5](#)): Item 6, non-trawl rockfish conservation area (RCA) modifications Item; Item 14, trawl/non-trawl Amendment 21 allocations; Item 15, mothership sector utilization; Item 16, moving Platt/Emley exempted fishing permit (EFP) into regulation; and a new item permitting the limited commercial use of discarded recreationally-caught fish waste.

## **Inseason Adjustments – Final Action**

The Council reviewed the status of groundfish fisheries to date and recommended the following inseason adjustments to commercial and recreational fisheries.

For commercial fisheries, the Council recommended changes to the following commercial nearshore rockfish fishery trip limits in the State of California:

1. For Limited Entry and Open Access Fixed Gear: 42° 00" N. Lat. to 40° 10' N. Lat., increase the minor nearshore rockfish (other than black rockfish) sub-limit to 1,500 lbs per two months as soon as possible.
2. For Limited Entry and Open Access Fixed Gear: 40° 10' N. Lat. to the Mexico Border, increase the deeper nearshore rockfish trip-limit to 1,200 lbs per two months beginning with trip Period 3 (May-June). Period two (March-April) will remain closed.

For recreational fisheries, the Council recommended the following rockfish bag limit changes in the State of California:

1. Increase the California canary rockfish (*Sebastes pinniger*) sub-bag limit from two (2) to three (3) fish within the overall 10-fish bag limit as soon as possible.
2. Increase the California black rockfish (*Sebastes melanops*) sub-bag limit from three (3) to four (4) fish within the overall 10-fish bag limit as soon as possible.

The Council also requested an update to lingcod catch projections based on the complete set of 2018 data to be presented at the April meeting during the Inseason Action agenda item.

## **Implementation of the 2019 Pacific Whiting Fishery Under the U.S./Canada Agreement**

The 2019 Pacific whiting assessment indicated the stock is healthy at 64.1 percent of its unfished spawning biomass, which was slightly lower than estimated last year. The stock has remained at a relatively high abundance since 2013 due to the strength of large 2010 and 2014 cohorts. The 2019 coastwide total allowable catch (TAC) of 597,500 mt is the same as in 2017 and 2018, resulting in an allocation of 441,433 mt for U.S. fisheries.

# **Pacific Halibut Management**

## **Annual International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Meeting Report**

Mr. Steve Keith, the Assistant Director of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), provided a summary report on the 2019 annual IPHC meeting. The Council agreed to move forward with a workshop on the non-Indian directed commercial fishery and asked management

entities to discuss the potential scope of the workshop and report back at the April 2019 Council meeting.

The Council also directed staff to send a letter requesting IPHC take inseason action to remove the June 27 opening date for the non-Indian directed commercial fishery.

### **Incidental Catch Recommendations: Option for the Salmon Troll and Final Recommendations for Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries**

The Council adopted three options for incidental halibut retention in the 2019 Salmon troll fishery. Each option included a landing and possession limit on one halibut for every two Chinook, plus one additional halibut in excess of the possession/landing ratio. The possession/landing limit per trip ranged from 15 to 35 halibut among the three options.

Final Recommendations for Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries: The Council recommended the 2019 incidental halibut catch restrictions in the fixed gear fishery north of Point Chehalis from April 1 through October 31, be set at 200 pounds of dressed weight halibut for every 1,000 pounds dressed weight of sablefish, plus 2 additional halibut in excess of the ratio.

## **Highly Migratory Species Management**

### **Drift Gillnet Performance Metrics Review**

The Council directed the HMSMT to continue work on its proposed method for reporting annual performance metrics and for evaluating multi-year trends in fishery performance using a bycatch rate approach. The Council also asked the HMSMT to consider how performance metrics can incentivize bycatch reduction by fishery participants. The HMSMT is slated to provide annual estimates against performance metrics at the June Council meeting and detail the methodology for a multi-annual bycatch rate approach along with results from the proposed method.

## **Administrative Matters**

### **Marine Planning Update**

The Council received an update on regional marine planning efforts, including a [description](#) of the West Coast Oceans Alliance, which was developed to facilitate regional marine planning and to support the West Coast Data [Portal](#), among other functions. The Council expressed support for continued participation in west coast marine planning efforts.

## **Membership Appointments; Statement of Organization, Practices, and Procedures; and Council Operating Procedures**

The Council reviewed and approved the following appointments:

- Mr. Greg Krutzikowsky was appointed to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) seat on the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team formerly held by Ms. Cyreis Schmitt.
- Mr. Patrick Mirick was appointed to the ODFW seat on the Groundfish Endangered Species Workgroup formerly held by Dr. Caren Braby.
- Ms. Caroline McKnight was appointed to the California Department of Fish Wildlife (CDFW) vacancy on the Groundfish Management Team.
- Mr. Travis Buck was appointed to the CDFW seat on the ad hoc Ecosystem Workgroup formerly held by Ms. Deb Wilson-Vandenberg.
- Ms. Melinda Rowse was appointed to the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center seat on the Salmon Technical Team formerly held by Dr. Robert Kope.
- Mr. Jon Pink was appointed to the Washington Coastal Tribal Fisheries vacancy on the Salmon Advisory Subpanel.

The Council also welcomed Sergeant Kit Rosenberger as an alternate for Captain Dan Chadwick as a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Consultant.

The Council reviewed revisions to the Council Operating Procedures regarding rules of conduct, staffing expectations, and the Council's new electronic public comment policies. The Council directed staff to provide a summary of [March Advisory Body statements](#) and to continue to solicit input on the revisions at the [April 2019 Council meeting](#). The Council is tentatively scheduled to approve final revisions at the June 2019 Council meeting.

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