

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON 2019 EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS (EFPs) – FINAL APPROVAL

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) reviewed the revised applications for exempted fishing permits (EFP) for 2019 from the California Wetfish Producers Association (CWPA) ([Agenda Item E.2. Attachment 1](#)) and the West Coast Pelagic Conservation Group (WCPCG) ([Agenda Item E.2. Attachment 2](#)). Both applications are seeking exemptions from any potential restrictions on directed fishing for Pacific Sardine (sardine) during the 2019-2020 sardine fishing year.

At its June 2017 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (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 2019 EFP application from CWPA (Agenda Item E.2, Attachment 1) is to continue to address issues identified in the aerial survey methodology review. The pilots will conduct nearshore surveys to address uncertainties of CPS abundances in nearshore waters where large National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration survey vessels are unable to sample.

The proposed research project again 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. Sets will be subsampled for biological information and the catch sold to offset costs of the research program. New for 2019, the CWPA EFP is proposing to extend the nearshore point sets to include the area of Monterey, California. The tonnage of sardines harvested within this proposed 2019 EFP is not to exceed a total of 400 metric tons (mt). All sardines harvested will count towards the EFP limit.

The WCPCG EFP application is requesting to continue and expand their collaborative research effort with the 2019 Southwest Fisheries Science Center summer acoustic trawl survey in the Pacific Northwest. They propose to purse seine in nearshore waters off Washington and Oregon in the summer of 2019 concurrent with NOAA surveys in the area. No more than 5 mt of sardine will be taken for scientific information. An EFP was submitted and approved in 2018 and then withdrawn by WCPCG due to a lack of funding.

The CPSMT recognizes the value of the EFP research proposed by both groups to provide data that has not been attainable by other means that may be useful for sardine stock assessments and other CPS abundance estimates. Both EFPs address high priority research needs to produce better estimates of biomass. The CPSMT supports the applications and a Council recommendation to the National Marine Fisheries Service to issue the EFPs. The Council may wish to wait to establish tonnage for EFPs following discussion of [Agenda Item E.3](#), however, the CPSMT supports up to the maximum tonnage requested by both EFPs. The CPSMT commends the applicants on their continuing efforts to develop and improve methods to measure the biomass and distribution of CPS.