

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES SUBPANEL REPORT ON
CENTRAL SUBPOPULATION OF NORTHERN ANCHOVY LITIGATION RESPONSE

The Coastal Pelagic Species Subpanel (CPSAS) reviewed the court-ordered Proposed Rule (Agenda Item E.5, Supplemental Attachment 3) requiring the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to develop new reference points for the overfishing limit (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), and annual catch limit (ACL) for the central subpopulation of northern anchovy (CSNA), based on best available science. The CPSAS also heard the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) discussion of this agenda item.

The Proposed Rule was based on the current ‘monitored’ stock policy embedded in the CPS fishery management plan. NMFS reviewed existing data sources and followed a similar process already approved by the SSC and the Council when determining maximum sustainable yield (MSY)/OFL for CSNA. Specifically, NMFS averaged the biomass estimates from two recent acoustic trawl surveys and a daily egg production method survey, then applied an Emsy (proxy for exploitation rate at maximum sustainable yield) of 0.239, based on an average of the best-fitted models in the last full stock assessment. The outcome was an OFL of 94,290 metric tons (mt) and an ABC/ACL of 23,573 mt.

The CPSAS notes that the current abundance of central stock anchovy is close to the spawning biomass present when the original reference points were developed. Thus, the new OFL, ABC, ACL, and Emsy also are similar, albeit slightly lower.

The CPSAS supports these new reference points as a reasonable approach to manage the central subpopulation in the near term. Although the SSC offered suggestions for other potential approaches, the consensus appeared to accept the reference points in the Proposed Rule as adequate. The CPSAS also suggests that the Council continue to work expeditiously toward updating CSNA reference points within the Council process.

The CPSAS thanks NMFS for its consideration in developing new reference points that will continue to sustain the fishery while the Council continues its stepwise process to update anchovy management.