

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) reviewed the Forage Fish Conservation Act (H.R. 2236). The bill proposes to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) in specific places and ways that would greatly affect the management of coastal pelagic species (CPS). This report does not represent an exhaustive list of all the effects to CPS management.

This act defines “forage fish” in a narrow way that excludes the juvenile life history stages of many species that are managed under the purview of the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and which play a similar role in the marine ecosystem as forage for larger fish, marine mammals and birds. It defines “low trophic level” in a new paragraph in the MSA and adds a new section to the paragraph that defines the term “optimum” with respect to the yield from fisheries targeting forage fish as newly defined by this act.

Section 303 of the MSA on Content of Fishery Management Plans would be amended to add specific requirements for setting annual catch limits (ACLs) for “forage fish fisheries” that “assess, specify, *and reduce*” ACLs to account for the “diet needs” of other fish species, marine mammals and birds. The ACLs for these “forage fish” as defined by this bill would need to include the accounting of those diet needs that would be tasked to the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

PFMC
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