

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON APPROACHES TO CHANGING CATCH LIMITS PHASED CATCH LIMITS – SCOPING

Members of the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) attended a Groundfish Management Team (GMT) webinar related to this agenda item on May 2, 2019. The CPSMT appreciates the invitation from the GMT. The CPSMT thinks the process to develop and consider new sigmas and the scoping of acceptable biological catch (ABC) phase-in approaches have not fully considered CPS stocks and implications for CPS management since it has solely focused on groundfish.

In March 2019 the Council adopted new SSC recommended sigma values for determining ABC buffers. As a consequence of the new sigma values, ABC buffers have increased, which in turn reduces annual catch limits (ACL). This evoked a particular concern for some high attainment groundfish stocks, and prompted this scoping process to evaluate various means to mitigate the negative socio-economic impacts of the reduced catch limits. National Standard 1 guidelines allow for ABC control rules to be “phased in” over a maximum of three years.

The CPSMT reviewed the National Marine Fisheries Service Report 1 (Agenda Item D.5.a) which described six different approaches.

- Increase frequency of some types of assessments
- Re-examining assumptions about future catch
- Increase the ACL
- Case-by-case phase-in actions
- Phased-in ABC reduction
- Adjust maximum P* in FMP

At this time, the CPSMT does not see an immediate fishery need for the Council to consider ABC phase-in approaches for CPS and recommends allowing the process to advance separately for groundfish independent of CPS. The staleness penalty currently has greater consequence for groundfish because groundfish stocks can go many more years between assessments than for CPS stocks, such as Pacific sardine and Pacific mackerel. The penalty resets with each benchmark or update assessment. On the current assessment schedule, Pacific mackerel would reset every 4th year so a penalty would be applied for three years. Pacific sardine has been more fluid; there were benchmark assessments conducted in 2009, 2011, 2014, and 2017, with either updates or catch-only projections done in intervening years. At most, the penalty would have been applied to two years. Additionally, the harvest guideline for Pacific sardine and Pacific mackerel is typically lower than the ABC.

The CPSMT does see value in evaluating ABC phase-in approaches for CPS stocks to determine whether and how they may benefit management of CPS and this analysis could be brought forward for Council consideration at a future meeting.