

Pacific Council News

Winter 2015 | www.pcouncil.org

This newsletter reports on decisions made at the November, 2015 Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting, held in Garden Grove, California. The Council recommends commercial & recreational fishery management measures for Federal waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. All Council recommendations are subject to approval by National Marine Fisheries Service. [Sign up for other notices here](#). The Council has five public meetings a year. The *supplemental* public comment deadline for the March 2016 Council meeting is 5:00 on February 29; email pfmc.comments@noaa.gov.

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HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES NEWS

Drift Gillnet Fishery Policy Discussed

In November, the Council discussed management of the swordfish drift gillnet fishery. The Council reiterated its recommendation to NMFS to issue an exempted fishing permit (EFP) to test the use of modified large-mesh drift gillnet gear for fishing by two boats inside the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area, with fishing conducted at times and in areas by when bycatch is likely to be low and swordfish abundance high. The EFP will test generally whether “eco-set triggered fishing” can result in substantially higher swordfish catch with far less bycatch.



Swordfish. Photo: NOAA.

The Council also discussed its swordfish fishery management policy—specifically in terms of the drift gillnet fishery off California. In general, the Council strives to achieve a productive, well-monitored fishery of reasonably high volume that is economically viable to participants, targeting swordfish but including other healthy highly migratory species, with non-target bycatch less than what occurred in the historic drift gillnet fishery.

If the small-scale testing under the EFP is successful, it will likely lead to another EFP with more vessels in order to gather more scientific data. If innovations tested by this and later EFPs are more successful in targeting catch and lowering bycatch than the current drift gillnet fishery, drift gillnet vessels may, depending on future Council action, be allowed to access all (or portions of) the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area when swordfish catch rates are higher and protected species bycatch is lower. Any such fishery will operate under hard caps for protected species. (For further details on hard caps, see the [September 2015 newsletter](#)).

The Council recognized the promise of deep-set buoy gear as a viable low- or no-bycatch gear for catching swordfish, and plans to quickly authorize deep-set buoy gear under the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. The next action on deep-set buoy gear is scheduled for the March 2016 Council meeting. A Council process to authorize shallow-set longline gear outside the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) was given lower priority, but still judged to be important; Hawaii-permitted shallow-set longline vessels are currently landing significant amounts of swordfish on the West Coast.

The Council voted in November 2014 not to end the use of drift gillnet gear, because relying only on harpoon and (yet-to-be-allowed) buoy gear fisheries will probably not allow enough commercial harvest to compete with foreign-caught fish. Foreign-caught fish incur higher levels of bycatch—including sea turtles and marine mammals—than domestic fisheries, causing more ecological damage on a global level. The Council is also looking into the global benefits to leatherback turtles if a better-performing drift gillnet fishery replaces foreign-caught swordfish in the U.S. marketplace.

The Council is interested in testing various configurations of pelagic longline gear as another alternative to the existing drift gillnet fishery, both within the EEZ and on the high seas, similar to the Western Pacific Council’s approach. The Council would like to manage all gear types in the swordfish fishery under Federal (rather than state) permits, consistent with management of other commercial fisheries. The Council set a control date of June 24, 2014 to start this process.

Two related issues are tentatively scheduled for the June 2016 Council meeting: scoping for a fishery

EFP: Exempted fishing permit. A permit issued by National Marine Fisheries Service that allows exemptions from some regulations in order to study the effectiveness, bycatch rate, or other aspects of an experimental fishing gear. EEZ: Exclusive economic zone. The area from 3-200 miles offshore.

management plan amendment dealing with pelagic longline fishing outside the EEZ, and creating a Federal permit for highly migratory species under Magnuson-Stevens Act authority.

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES NEWS



Anchovies. Photo by Paul Asman and Jill Lenoble, [Flickr Creative Commons](#)

NMFS: National Marine Fisheries Service. A division of NOAA.

New Assessment Planned for Anchovy Stock

In November, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southwest Fisheries Science Center reported on recent information about anchovy stocks, including changes in relative abundance and distribution of northern anchovy in light of the major shifts in environmental conditions in the California Current.

There are two subpopulations of northern anchovy. The central subpopulation extends approximately from Punta Baja, Mexico to northern California. The northern subpopulation ranges from northern California to British Columbia, Canada. Council discussion and public comment at recent Council meetings have included concerns about the anchovy population—especially the central subpopulation. The Council agreed that more attention should be afforded to these stocks, which have not been assessed for about 20 years.

In response to these concerns, the Science Center plans to conduct an anchovy stock assessment by November 2016. A scientific workshop will be held in Spring 2016 to develop the best approach for the assessment. The Council also asked the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team to explore alternative management and policy approaches and report back to the Council in Fall 2016. In November, the Council will consider moving to more active management of the anchovy fishery.

GROUND FISH NEWS



Juvenile big skate in waters near Seattle. Photo: Ratha Grimes, [Flickr Creative Commons](#).

Inseason Actions

Inseason: The Council looked at the progress of the shorebased individual fishing quota program and recommended the following big skate trip limits, effective January 1, 2016: 5,000 pounds/2 months for Period 1; 25,000 pounds/2 months for Period 2; 30,000 pounds/2 months for Period 3; 35,000 pounds/2 months for Period 4; 10,000 pounds/2 months for Period 5; and 5,000 pounds/2 months for Period 6.

Big skate: The Council reclassified big skate from an “ecosystem component species” to a species actively managed in the fishery beginning in 2017. Big skate will be managed using stock-specific harvest specifications with cumulative landing limits and a sorting requirement.

Slope rockfish: The Council removed blackgill rockfish from the Slope Rockfish complex south of 40° 10' N. latitude and reallocated blackgill rockfish and the remaining species in the southern Slope Rockfish complex to trawl and non-trawl sectors ([see Alternative 1](#)). No change was made to accumulation limits for these species. Implementation of this initiative is tentatively scheduled for January 1, 2018.

Black Rockfish Assessments Adopted

The Council adopted [new full assessments](#) for black rockfish off California, Oregon, and Washington. The Oregon and Washington stocks are above target biomass levels and, while the California stock was estimated to be below the target biomass level at the start of 2015, it is projected to be above target in 2017. Black rockfish is an important target for nearshore recreational and commercial fisheries from central California north on the west coast. These assessments will inform management decisions for groundfish fisheries in 2017 and beyond.



Lingcod near Point Lobos, CA. Photo: Patrick Webster, [Flickr Creative Commons](#).

Council Forwards Exempted Permits for Further Action

Four exempted fishing permit EFP applications were submitted for Council consideration in November. EFPs provide a way to test innovative fishing gears and strategies in the pursuit of sustainable and risk-averse fisheries. The four applications included a Nature Conservancy proposal to test selective harvest of lingcod with pot gear; a proposal from United Catcher Boats related to mothership processing of Pacific whiting south of 42° N. Lat.; a Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative proposal related to catcher-processor processing of Pacific whiting in the same area; and a proposal by Scott Cook for commercial midwater hook & line rockfish fishing in the rockfish conservation area off the Oregon coast.

The Council forwarded the Nature Conservancy proposal for further consideration for the 2017-18 management cycle, as long as activity is limited to waters west of the 75 fathom depth contour. At its March 2016 meeting, the Council will consider continuing for another cycle an EFP on the use of jig fishing to target yellowtail rockfish. Additionally, NMFS recommended, and the Council agreed with, expanding the number of vessels participating in the ongoing electronic monitoring EFPs, but recommended no more than 20 additional vessels. Further, NMFS will consider extending the electronic monitoring EFPs past the 2015/2016 cycle and will report back to the Council at a future meeting. In its effort to balance need and workload, the Council did not move any of the other EFPs forward.

Trawl Catch Share Program Meeting Planned

Environmental Defense Fund, National Marine Fisheries Service, and participants in the fishing industry are sponsoring a meeting on February 16-18 ("Santa Rosa 3") to discuss the groundfish trawl catch share program (individual fishing quotas and co-ops). The location is yet to be announced. Travel assistance may be available for active fishery participants.

West coast trawl fishermen have been fishing under a catch share program for five years. This workshop is designed to bring together working fishermen, vessel owners, processors, managers, and others to discuss the current state of the fishery and explore needed improvements. Emphasis will be on identifying key fishing, business and management strategies, as well as regulatory changes to improve the economic performance of the fishery, increase associated benefits to coastal communities, and continue to meet the conservation objectives of the catch share program.

ACL: Annual catch limit. The ACL is the amount of total catch (i.e., landings + discard mortalities) specified for an actively managed stock or stock complex. The ACL accounts for all sources of fishing-related mortality including catches in research activities.

A Steering Committee comprised of fishery industry leaders, NMFS, Council staff, and EDF is currently developing the workshop agenda. Plenary sessions will be followed by breakout sessions focused on exploring specific ways to address identified fishery challenges and facilitating participation by all attendees. Time for informal networking will also be provided.

Accommodation, parking and meals will be covered for a maximum of two eligible participants from each entity. Eligible participants include skippers, crew, quota holders, or processor personnel. Travel assistance may be available for active fishery participants. Please contact Katherine Mah at EDF for details (kmah@edf.org)

Workshop agenda and registration information will be available in January 2016. Check the Council [trailing action webpage](#) for updates.

Biennial Harvest Specs, Management Measures Adopted for 2017-18

In November the Council adopted final [overfishing limits](#), acceptable biological catches and annual catch limits (ACLs) for all stocks and complexes except black rockfish in California, California scorpionfish, canary rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, and widow rockfish, for which the Council chose a range of alternative annual catch limits for analysis. The Council is scheduled to adopt all remaining final

2017 and 2018 harvest specifications at their April 2016 meeting in Vancouver, Washington.

The Council asked its advisory bodies to analyze an alternative that combines the ACL alternatives with adjustments to routine management measures. The Council set this as a top priority so that the fishery can begin on January 1, 2017. Several new management measures will also be analyzed, but they are a lower priority.



Bob Dooley fishes for whiting off the west coast. Photo: NOAA.

Council Makes Changes to Whiting Monitoring Alternative

In November, the Council made changes to the final preferred alternative for an electronic monitoring program for the whiting fishery, as described in detail [here](#).

The Council's preferred alternative is now Alternative 3 (it was previously Alternative 2). Alternative 3 requires logbooks, with video recordings used to audit their accuracy. The Council adopted 100 percent auditing for the time being.

The Council specified that a third party provider would conduct video reviews and that the industry would be responsible for paying for the review. This is a change from the prior policy that directed NMFS (or its agent) to conduct and pay for video reviews until a third party provider certification process was established.

The Council removed the “Discard Species List Adjustment” option, which would have created a way to adjust the list of species that could be discarded, because the whiting fishery will be a maximized retention fishery where no discard will be allowed. If this option is needed in the future, the Council will revisit the issue.

The Council also required that discard logbooks and state logbooks be postmarked and submitted to Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission within 24 hours of landing.

Under discard accounting for the mothership fishery, the Council changed their preferred Discard Accounting to Option A (“Estimate discard with electronic monitoring and count against individual fishing quota”).

No regulations were finalized via the deeming process at this Council meeting.

The Council scheduled final deeming of detailed whiting fishery regulations for April 2016. The Council intends to put an electronic monitoring program in place for both whiting and fixed gear by January 2017. An update on EFP results is scheduled for March 2016; deeming of fixed gear regulations is scheduled for April 2016, and consideration of bottom trawl electronic monitoring regulations is scheduled for November.

Council Discusses Alternatives for Monitoring Vessel Movement

In November the Council selected preliminary preferred alternatives for monitoring vessels with vessel monitoring systems. The Council had adopted a preliminary range of alternatives in April for monitoring restricted areas, removing derelict crab pots from rockfish conservation areas, fishery declaration enhancements, and movement of individual fishing quota fishpot gear across management lines. Council staff developed a [public scoping document](#) describing the alternatives. In November, the Council adopted the following preliminary preferred alternatives. The Council chose not to include removal of derelict crab pots in the suite of alternatives, since states already have crab pot removal programs in place. Adoption of final preferred alternatives is scheduled for April 2016.



Salmon skeleton on the bank of the Columbia River.
Photo: NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region

The Council adopted revised purpose and need statements and recommended preliminary preferred alternatives for Management Measures 1, 3, and 4. For more details, see [here](#) and [here](#).

SALMON NEWS

Salmon Management Schedule Adopted

The Council adopted the tentative 2016 [salmon management schedule](#), including plans for public hearings in Westport, Washington and Coos Bay, Oregon on March 28 and Fort Bragg, California on March 29. Additionally, the Council confirmed a schedule and approved membership for an ad hoc Sacramento River Winter Chinook Workgroup to develop and analyze alternative control rules for this stock. The Council and NMFS are striving to complete the review of Sacramento River winter Chinook incidental harvest policy in time for NMFS to use in the 2017 salmon management process, but recognize that the schedule is aggressive and relies on a compressed timeframe with a substantial workload.

The Council received a proposal for an industry-sponsored test fishery in the California Klamath Management Zone and recommended that the proponents of the test fishery coordinate with the NMFS proposed genetic stock identification sampling in this area and provide a revised proposal for detailed review at the March 2016 Council meeting.

HABITAT NEWS

Habitat Committee Discusses Humboldt Bay Aquaculture Project, Water Temperatures, Forestry Buffers

At its November meeting, the Habitat Committee heard comments from representatives of Coast Seafoods, the Humboldt Bay Harbor District and Audubon (also representing Earthjustice, Ocean Conservancy, and Oceana) concerning the Coast Seafoods proposal for an expansion of their aquaculture operations in Humboldt Bay. The Council approved a letter proposed by the Habitat Committee commenting on the draft environmental impact report and expressing concerns about impacts on essential fish habitat.



Salmon River, Oregon.
Photo: Bureau of Land
Management.

The Habitat Committee also expressed concerns about high freshwater temperature conditions and salmonid mortalities in watersheds throughout the Columbia Basin in 2015. High mortality occurred for juveniles and adults in the Willamette, Columbia and Snake rivers. Water temperatures exceeded 68F degrees (the temperature limit established in the 1995 NMFS Biological Opinion) for more days in 2015 than the 10-year average.

The Council sent a letter to the Oregon Board of Forestry on September 23, 2015 regarding the inadequacy of streamside shade buffer rules under the Oregon Forest Practices Act. The Council noted that scientific research by Oregon Department of Forestry showed that the buffers were inadequate to meet the federal

“protecting cold water” standard, and that 100’ buffers on small- and medium-sized streams were required to meet that standard. At their Board meeting on November 6th, Board members voted to develop administrative rules that create a 60-foot buffer on small fish-bearing streams and an 80-foot buffer on medium-sized fish-bearing streams. These buffers are an improvement over existing buffers, but according to Department of Forestry modeling, they will fail to meet “protecting cold water” standards more than half the time.

Council Comments on Drought Legislation

In response to a Congressional request for information from Representatives Jared Huffman (D-CA) and Mike Thompson (D-CA), the Council analyzed and commented on three pending drought relief bills making their way through Congress, specifically with regard to impacts of each bill on salmon

populations on the West Coast. The Council generally supports the provisions of H.R.2983/S.1837 (co-sponsored by Rep. Huffman and Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA)), although that bill has not gained much traction in Congress. The Council expressed support for some provisions of S. 1894 (co-sponsored by Senators Boxer and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)), although it expressed concern with provisions of that bill that call for more reservoirs and increased pumping from the San Francisco Bay Delta Estuary. The Council, however, opposes H.R. 2898 (Rep. David Valadao, (R-CA)), noting that it “appears primarily aimed at increasing water for agricultural interests at the expense of fish by permanently weakening Federal and state endangered species protections.” The Council noted that the negative impacts of H.R. 2898 could have far-reaching effects on salmon fisheries in Oregon and Washington, in addition to California, as many of the fish originating in California’s Central Valley are caught off the entire West Coast. For more information, [see the letter to Rep. Huffman and Thompson](#). (Thanks to the Institute for Fisheries Resources for the summary).



Pulling in a halibut.
Photo: Andrea Pokrzywinski, [Flickr Creative Commons](#).

HALIBUT NEWS

Council Takes Final Action on Catch Sharing Plan

The Council took final action on the 2016 catch sharing plan and regulations. In Washington, status quo measures will remain in place, except that the season opening date in the north coast sub-area will be the first Saturday in May. The season structure will maintain the Thursday and Saturday openings during the second week in May and the management closure already in place during the third week in May. In Oregon, status quo measures will continue, except that the Central Oregon Coast Subarea nearshore season opening date will be June 1, with the season running seven days per week until October 31, or until the allocation is attained. Further, retention of other species of flatfish, Pacific cod, and sablefish when halibut fishing in the Southern Oregon Subarea will be allowed. In California, the same approach used in 2015 to establish the recreational season structure and inseason management processes will be used in 2016.

The Council also selected a preliminary preferred alternative which would provide NMFS the automatic action authority to prohibit retention of halibut in the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington. The automatic action would occur upon posting of the notice by the International Pacific Halibut Commission on its website that the halibut quota for this fishery has been reached. Closures will also be announced on the NMFS halibut hotline. The Council is scheduled to take final action on this measure at the March 2016 Council meeting.

BUSINESS MATTERS

Fiscal Matters

The Council approved a provisional calendar year 2016 operating budget of \$4,767,288, and tasked the Executive Director with pursuing additional funding for six special projects.

Appointments

The Council made the following advisory body appointments and increased the public at-large seats on the Habitat Committee from one to two seats:

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL: California Commercial: **Richie Ashley, David Hawthorn**, and **Nick Jurlin**; Oregon Commercial: **Ryan Kapp**; Washington Commercial: **Robert Zuanich**; California Processor: **Diane Pleschner-Steele**; Oregon Processor: **Mike Okoniewski**; Washington Processor: **Albert Carter**; California Sport/Charter: **Steve Crooke**; Conservation: **Gillian Lyons**



Galley window, Newport. Photo: Jennifer Gilden.

ECOSYSTEM ADVISORY SUBPANEL: California: **Pete Adams, Kathy Fosmark**; Oregon: **Ben Enticknap, Frank Warrens, Scott McMullen**; Washington: **Paul Dye, Terrie Klinger, Nate Stone**

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL: Fixed Gear: **Bob Alverson, Michele Longo-Eder, Gerry Richter**; Bottom Trawl: **Travis Hunter**; Midwater Trawl: **Jeff Lackey**; At-large Trawl: **Kevin Dunn, Brent Paine**; Open Access South of Cape Mendocino: **Daniel Platt**; Open Access North of Cape Mendocino: **Jeff Miles**; Processors: **Susan Chambers, Tom Libby**; At-Sea Processor: **Dan Waldeck**; California Charter South of Point Conception: **Louis Zimm**; California Charter North of Point Conception: **Bob Ingles**; Oregon Charter: **Tyler Turner**; Washington Charter: **Robert Mirante**; Sport Fisheries: **John Holloway, Kevin Lanier, Tom Marking**; Conservation: **Shems Jud**; Tribal Fisher: **Steve Joner**

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL: Commercial Troll: **Wayne Heikkila**; Commercial Purse Seine: **August Felando**; Commercial Gillnet: **Arthur Lorton**; Commercial Fisheries: **Doug Fricke, Bill Sutton, Gary Burke**; Processor South of Cape Mendocino: **Dave Rudie**; Processor North of Cape Mendocino: **Pierre Marchand**; California Charter Boat: **Mike Thompson**; Washington/Oregon Charter Boat: **Linda Buell**; Private Sport: **Bob Osborne**; Conservation: **Chuck Farwell**; Public At-large: **Pamela Tom**

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL: California Troller: **Dave Bitts**; Oregon Troller: **Paul Heikkila**; Washington Troller: **Jim Olson**; Commercial Gillnet Fishery: **Greg Johnson**; Processor: **Gerry Reinholdt**; California Charter Boat: **John Atkinson**; Oregon Charter Boat: **Mike Sorenson**; Washington Charter Boat: **Butch Smith**; California Sport Fisher: **Marc Gorelnik**; Oregon Sport Fisher: **Richard Heap**; Washington Sport Fisher: **Steve Watrous**; Idaho Sport Fisher: **Richard Scully**; Washington Tribal: **Calvin Frank**; California Tribal: **George Kautsky**; Conservation: **Jim Hie**

HABITAT COMMITTEE: Commercial Fishing Industry: **Joel Kawahara**; Sport Fishing Industry: **Liz Hamilton**; Conservation: **Doug DeHart**; California Tribal: **Dave Hillemeier**; Public At-large: **Fred Jurick, Stephen Scheiblauer**

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE At-Large: **Evelyn Brown, Michael Harte, Dan Holland, John Field, Dr. André E. Punt, Will Satterthwaite, Aaron Berger**; California Fish and Wildlife: **John Budrick**

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM: California Fish and Wildlife: **Andre Klein**

AD HOC SACRAMENTO RIVER WINTER CHINOOK WORKGROUP: California Fish and Wildlife: **Brett Kormos, Jason Roberts**; NMFS West Coast Region: **Peter Dygert, Jeromy Jording**; NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center: **Michael O'Farrell, Michael Mohr**; NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center: **Eli**

Holmes; USFWS: Jim Smith.

AD HOC GROUND FISH ELECTRONIC MONITORING TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE: **Dan Erickson** replaced **Maggie Sommer** in the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Seat.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

March Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for March 9-14, 2016 in Sacramento, California. Public comment materials received by **11:59 pm, February 8**, will be mailed to Council members and appropriate advisory bodies prior to the March meeting. This is known as the “Advance Briefing Book Deadline.”

Public comment materials received at the Council office **after February 8, 11:59 pm, but by 11:59 pm, February 29** will be included in the supplemental materials distributed to the Council on the first day of the March meeting. This is known as the “Supplemental Public Comment Deadline.”

See the [Council’s Briefing Book Public Comment Deadlines webpage](#) for complete details on how to submit comments.

GROUND FISH

- « NMFS report
- « 2017-2018 fisheries check-in
- « Gear changes (final preferred alternative)
- « Inseason adjustments
- « Electronic monitoring for non-whiting fisheries (final preferred alternative)
- « Salmon consultation update
- « Midwater sport regulations (final)
- « Initial stock assessment plan and terms of reference

SALMON AND HALIBUT

- « NMFS Report
- « Review of 2015 fisheries & summary of 2016 stock abundance forecasts
- « Adopt 2016 management alternatives for public review
- « Report on the annual International Pacific Halibut Commission meeting
- « Incidental catch limit options for salmon troll & final for fixed-gear sablefish fisheries
- « Halibut incidental groundfish regulations (final)

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES

- « NMFS report
- « Recommendations for international management activities
- « Federal HMS permit scoping
- « Shallow-set longline amendment scoping

HABITAT & ECOSYSTEM

- « Current habitat issues
- « California Current ecosystem and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment report
- « Fishery Ecosystem Plan indicators and Climate Shift Initiative update

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

- « Legislative issues
- « Appointments

Upcoming Advisory Body Meetings

SALMON TECHNICAL TEAM WORK SESSIONS

Dates: January 19-22, February 16-19

Location: Pacific Fishery Management Council, Portland, Oregon

Purpose: At the January meeting, to draft the "Review of 2015 Ocean Salmon Fisheries" and discuss related issues. In February, to draft "Preseason Report I - Stock Abundance Analysis..." and discuss related issues.

Contact: Mike Burner (Mike.Burner@noaa.gov)

For More Info: [See detailed meeting announcement](#)