

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
METHODOLOGY REVIEW PRELIMINARY TOPIC SELECTION

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) requests that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) support an independent methodology review related to the habitat model and assumptions used to separate the putative ‘northern’ from ‘southern’ sardine stock. This follows from the discussion and a recommendation by the Scientific and Statistical Committee’s (SSC) CPS Subcommittee, as identified in the Subcommittee report to the full SSC for the update sardine stock assessment in 2018 (April 2018 Agenda Item C.5.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1).

The explicit SSC Subcommittee recommendation is as follows:

“Italic comments related to the 2020 benchmark assessment:”

- *An additional 35,000 mt of sardine was observed by the AT survey in the Southern California Bight and attributed to the Southern Subpopulation (SSP). **This highlights the need for the 2020 assessment to review the basis for the habitat model and perhaps refine estimates of both the catch and biomass attributable to the NSP and SSP. (emphasis added)**”*

The CPSAS is making this request in light of the presence of a significant abundance of sardine observed by fishermen in California, particularly in Southern California. The 2018 update assessment excluded 35,000 mt of sardine observed in the AT survey of the Southern California Bight on the assumption that they were ‘southern’ stock. If these fish had been included in the stock assessment, sardines would not have been declared ‘overfished.’

Ideally this review could be accomplished in time for the 2020 sardine STAR panel review, scheduled for February 2021. Given the numerous other issues identified by the SSC’s CPS Subcommittee for discussion at the benchmark assessment, we believe that this issue is among the most critical, and time might otherwise be inadequate for full review of the model and its assumptions absent a dedicated methodology review.

Thank you for your consideration.