

Decision Summary Document

Pacific Fishery Management Council

April 5-10, 2020

Council Meeting Decision Summary Documents are highlights of significant decisions made at Council meetings. Results of agenda items that do not reach a level of highlight significance are typically not described in the Decision Summary Document. For a more detailed account of Council meeting discussions, see the [Council meeting record and transcripts](#) or the [Council newsletter](#).

Salmon Management

Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast Coho Endangered Species Act Consultation Process

The Council formed an ad-hoc workgroup to develop a harvest control rule for southern Oregon/Northern California coast (SONCC) coho that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) could consider in establishing a new Endangered Species Act consultation standard for SONCC coho. A draft [Terms of Reference and Timeline](#) was provided by NMFS, which the ad-hoc workgroup will work to finalize at their first meeting.

2020 Management Measures - Final Action

The Council adopted management measures for 2020 ocean salmon fisheries and will transmit its recommendations to NMFS for implementation by May 6, 2020. [Detailed management measures](#) and a [press release](#) are posted on the [Council's webpage](#).

Coastal Pelagic Species Management

Pacific Sardine Assessment, Harvest Specifications, and Management Measures – Final Action

The Council adopted the 2020 Pacific Sardine [Assessment](#), with the following harvest specifications and management measures:

Pacific Sardine Harvest Specification	2020-21 (mt)
Biomass	28,276
Overfishing Limit (OFL)	5,525
Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC _{0.40})	4,288
Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	4,288
Annual Catch Target (ACT)	4,000

- An incidental sardine catch allowance of 20 percent for commercial coastal pelagic species (CPS) fisheries, except live bait and minor directed fishing;
- Directed take of sardines in the live bait fishery will be allowed. A per-trip limit of 1 mt of Pacific sardine will apply if the live bait fishery attains 2,500 mt;
- If the annual catch target of 4,000 mt is attained, a 1 mt per trip limit of Pacific sardine would apply to live bait, and a 1 mt per trip limit of incidentally caught Pacific sardine would apply to commercial CPS fisheries;
- An incidental per-trip allowance of 2 mt of sardines applies to non-CPS fisheries.

The Council also expressed support for the exempted fishing permit requests as submitted at the [November 2019](#) and [April 2020](#) Council meetings .

Pacific Halibut Management

Incidental Catch Limits for 2020 Salmon Troll Fishery – Final Action

The Council adopted final incidental halibut catch limits as follows: Open May 1, 2020, through the end of the 2020 salmon troll fishery, and beginning April 1, 2021, until modified through inseason action or superseded by the 2021 management measures.

License holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per two Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut landed per trip.

Groundfish Management

Implementation of the 2020 Pacific Whiting Fishery Under the U.S./Canada Agreement

The Council received a briefing from NMFS on the 2020 Pacific whiting assessment and the U.S.-Canada whiting treaty decision-making process. The new assessment indicates the stock is

healthy, but with a predicted decrease in abundance as the very strong 2010 and 2014 cohorts begin to wane from the population. The Joint Management Committee, the decision-making body in the U.S.-Canada whiting treaty process, failed to reach agreement on a coastwide total annual catch (TAC). Therefore, NMFS will be proposing a U.S. TAC through a rulemaking which is currently under review. The Council did not offer any recommendations on a U.S. TAC. The 2020 whiting fishery is scheduled to begin on May 15 pending the NMFS rulemaking.

Biennial Harvest Specifications for 2021-2022 Fisheries – Final Action

The Council adopted final 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications for all actively managed west coast groundfish stocks and stock complexes. They adopted the No Action alternative for all stocks as shown in Tables 2-2 and 2-3 in the [draft EA](#), except for cowcod south of 40° 10' N. lat., sablefish, black rockfish in Oregon, and shortbelly rockfish. For cowcod south of 40° 10' N. lat., sablefish, and black rockfish in Oregon, the Council selected Alternative 1 harvest specifications, as shown in Table 2-4, and for shortbelly rockfish, the Council chose an annual catch limit (ACL) of 2,000 mt, which was within the range of ACLs analyzed. These new harvest specifications are anticipated to be implemented on January 1, 2021 pending NMFS approval.

Electronic Monitoring Program Review

The Council adopted for public review potential changes to West Coast electronic monitoring (EM) Program regulations. These include the following items :

1. Change the implementation date to be no earlier than January 1, 2022 in the EM Program regulations for both the electronic monitoring provider permits and responsibilities, and the vessel and first receiver responsibilities;
2. Continuation of existing EM exempted fishing permits (EFPs), modified as necessary, until the effective date of the amended regulations with the understanding that new entrants will be allowed to join the extended EM EFPs.
3. The following recommendations from [NMFS](#):
 - Item 1: Hard Drive Deadline: increase the hard drive submission deadline to 72 hours from the beginning of the offload.
 - Item 2: Reusing Hard Drives: require EM data to be removed before reusing hard drives only if end-to-end encryption is not used.
 - Item 3: Limit on Switching Between EM and Observers for Whiting: remove the limit on switching between observers and EM for whiting vessels.

Item 4: Mothership/Catcher Vessel (MS/CV) Endorsement: remove the requirement for an MS/CV endorsement to use EM on mothership catcher vessel trips

Item 6: Logbook Processing: allow EM providers to receive and enter logbook information, rather than submitting to NMFS.

Item 7: Reporting Deadlines for EM Service Providers: require deadlines for EM service provider reports of technical assistance, logbook data, vessel operator feedback, EM summary and data compliance reports, and other as specified elsewhere.

The Council also recommends that NMFS, in consultation with the Council, conduct a comprehensive review regarding the EM Program Guidelines and EM Provider Manual to ensure consistency with NMFS procedural directives. The Council is expected to finalize recommendations at the June 2020 Council meeting.

Preliminary Preferred Management Measure Alternatives for 2021-2022 Fisheries

The Council adopted the preliminary preferred management measures for 2021 and 2022, as specified by the [Tribes](#), and recommended by the GMT ([Report 1](#) and [Report 2](#)). The Council modified two GMT recommendations: to increase the widow rockfish non-trawl allocation from 300 mt to 400 mt, and to add a 50 mt annual catch target (ACT) for cowcod. Additionally, the Council recommended that the GMT further develop an ACT alternative for shortbelly rockfish that would close a portion of the trawl fleet upon attainment. The GMT was given guidance to change the wording of their open access sablefish trip limit to mirror the language used for limited entry fixed gear trip limits. The Council will take final action on 2021-2022 groundfish management measures in June 2020.

Inseason Adjustments – Final Action

The Council adopted the Option 2 inseason adjustments recommended by the states of [Oregon and California](#) addressing limited entry fixed gear trip limits and minor modifications to the non-trawl rockfish conservation area. NMFS will review the recommended inseason adjustments and respond as appropriate considering agency workload, the supporting analyses, and the Council record.

Emergency Action to Consider Changing Seasonal Processing Limitations - Final Action

The Council modified their agenda to allow consideration of an emergency action to recommend NMFS allow an at-sea Pacific whiting processing platform to operate as both a Mothership and a Catcher-processor in the same calendar year during the 2020 Pacific whiting fishery. This action was taken at the request of industry representatives and the [Groundfish Advisory Subpanel](#) after a Mothership processor decided to abandon that sector this year to mitigate their risk associated with the current COVID-19 pandemic. That decision left three catcher vessels in the Mothership sector without a processing platform potentially stranding 24 percent of the entire shoreside whiting sector's quota, which would result in significant economic impacts. Allowing a Catcher-processor vessel to temporarily operate as an at-sea processor in the Mothership sector mitigates the impacts associated with the current processing limitations in these two sectors.

Administrative Matters

Other COVID-19 Concerns: Observer Coverage and Illness Reporting Requirement

In addition to the COVID-19 related actions taken under other agenda items, under open public comment, the Council heard significant testimony on the actual and potential impacts of COVID-19 on West Coast fishing fleets, processors, and coastal communities. In response, in order to minimize the spread of COVID-19 during the initial outbreak, the Council wrote a letter requesting that NMFS suspend Federally authorized at-sea observer coverage for all West Coast fisheries (including Highly Migratory Species and groundfish at-sea sectors) and trawl catch share shoreside catch monitors. The suspension is requested for the period of time and geographic areas covered by "shelter-in-place" or similar orders by the governors of Washington, Oregon and/or California, or any local government.

During the open comment discussion, the United States Coast Guard reported to the Council on a March 16, 2020 [Marine Safety Information Bulletin](#) that identifies the illness of a person on board any vessel as a hazardous condition (under 33 CFR 160.216) that may adversely affect the safety of a vessel or port facility. Vessels are required to immediately notify the nearest United States Coast Guard Captain of the Port if any person on board exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 or other flu-like illnesses.

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