

PACIFIC WHITING UTILIZATION IN THE MOTHERSHIP SECTOR

At this Council meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is tasked with adopting a final purpose and need statement and range of alternatives to address whiting fishery utilization issues. Staff from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) have reviewed the revised purpose and need provided in the scoping document ([Agenda Item G.3, Attachment 1, March 2021](#)) and the purpose and need adopted by the Council in September 2020. This joint agency report serves to share an alternative purpose and need statement for Council consideration in a way that provides the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), other Council members, and the public the opportunity to review and comment prior to Council action. Although the timing of this report does not allow the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel to review and comment on this report, interested stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide public testimony to the Council.

The revisions to the purpose and need statement are intended to strengthen the statement as it pertains to the range of alternatives. This version may more clearly address the following key questions, as they were framed in [Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 1, March 2021](#):

- What is the problem? (Under attainment in the MS whiting sector; specifically, lower attainment than the other whiting sectors)
- Why are we taking action? (Existing regulations may present barriers to utilization)
- What are the objectives of the action (what is the solution proposed)? (Modify specific regulations that have been identified as potentially contributing to under attainment, in order to provide MS sector participants with greater operational flexibility)
- What are we trying to achieve? (Reduced barriers to MS sector whiting utilization and increased utilization in the MS sector)

Purpose and Need

This action is needed because the mothership (MS) sector of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Trawl Catch Share Program is under attaining its allocations for whiting and has experienced lower average attainment than the other non-tribal whiting sectors since the start of the trawl catch share program, particularly since 2017. Causes of under attainment may include limited availability of motherships for delivery of catch due to seasonal overlap with the Alaska pollock fishery. In addition, existing regulations may be hindering some catcher vessels' opportunity to harvest or deliver fish to MS processors, by limiting the ability for available processors to accept fish from catcher vessels. In some cases, catcher vessels have been stranded without a mothership processor to deliver to for a season or year(s). These obstacles to harvest and processing in the MS sector have led to social and economic losses for participants.

The purpose of this action is to identify and revise regulations that may be unnecessarily constraining, in order to provide increased operational flexibility in the Pacific whiting fishery and increase the MS sector's ability to utilize its whiting allocation, while maintaining fair and equitable access to Pacific whiting by all sectors of the program.

The actions identified support the economic and utilization elements of the Trawl Catch Share Program goal to "create and implement a capacity rationalization plan that increases net economic benefits, creates individual economic stability, provides for full utilization of the trawl sector allocation, considers environmental impacts, and achieves individual accountability of catch and bycatch". In addition, the action supports Management Goals 2 and 3 of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan which respectively seek to maximize the value of the groundfish resource as a whole and to achieve the maximum biological yield of the overall groundfish fishery. In addition, this action supports National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act to achieve the optimum yield from the fishery.