

Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative
Amendment 20 Catcher/Processor Cooperative
Annual Report 2020

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Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative Final Annual Report for 2020

Introduction

In 1997, the owners of the catcher/processor (C/P) vessels operating in the Pacific whiting fishery formed a fishing cooperative to coordinate harvesting efforts. This research and harvesting cooperative is the Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative (PWCC). A private contract dictates the activities of the PWCC and a harvest agreement facilitates efficient management and accurate accounting of harvest by the PWCC and PWCC member companies.

In 2011, rationalization of the Pacific coast groundfish trawl fishery was implemented via Amendments 20 and 21 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) summarized the significant effects of Amendment 20 on the shoreside groundfish trawl and mothership whiting fisheries, as well as the effect on the C/P fishery in the September 2, 2011 proposed rule for the Program Improvement and Enhancement Rule:

“In January 2011, NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council set up a new management program called the trawl rationalization program. This program significantly changes how two of these groups work. Shore trawlers now fish under their own set of individual species quotas by vessel.... [T]he mothership fishery works as a coop where catcher-vessels and motherships work together collectively. The catcher-processor fleet continues as a single coop.”

Trawl rationalization regulations require a final report of the prior year’s fishery be submitted to NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council in March the following year.

Purpose of Report

This report is intended to disclose all information required by or identified in Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 660.113(d)(3). The table at the end of this report provides the C/P cooperative's actual retained and discarded catch of whiting, salmon, Pacific halibut, rockfish, groundfish, and other species on a vessel-by-vessel basis. The catch data in this report was provided by Sea State, Inc. and was collected by the NMFS – At-Sea Hake Observer Program. Prior to trawl rationalization, NMFS provided a similar report, but with catch information at the sector level (rather than individual vessel information). Catch information at the C/P-vessel level was and is known by NMFS. Therefore, production of this more detailed report by the PWCC should reduce NMFS workload and cost burden.

Reporting Requirements

Federal regulations (50CFR660.113(d)(3)) detail the report requirements:

“(3) Annual coop report. The designated coop manager for the C/P coop must submit an annual report to NMFS and the Council by March 31 each year, before a coop permit is issued for that

year. The annual coop report will contain information about the previous year's fishery, including:

- (i) The C/P sector's annual allocation of Pacific whiting;
- (ii) The C/P coop's actual retained and discarded catch of Pacific whiting, salmon, Pacific halibut, rockfish, groundfish, and other species on a vessel-by-vessel basis;
- (iii) A description of the method used by the C/P coop to monitor performance of cooperative vessels that participated in the fishery;
- (iv) A description of any actions taken by the C/P coop in response to any vessels that exceed their allowed catch and bycatch; and
- (v) Plans for the current year's C/P coop fishery, including the companies participating in the cooperative, the harvest agreement, and catch monitoring and reporting requirements.”

A. C/P Sector's Annual Allocation of Pacific Whiting

In May 2020, NMFS issued the C/P cooperative permit, which was effective on May 15, 2020. As specified at 50 CFR 660.160(c)(2) “The C/P Coop Program allocation of Pacific whiting is equal to the catcher/processor sector allocation. Only a single coop may be formed in the catcher/processor sector with the one permitted coop receiving the catcher/processor sector allocation.” For 2020, the C/P sector amounts of Pacific whiting (per NMFS, Initial Administrative Determination (IAD) Notice of Right to Appeal, May 11, 2020):

2020 C/P sector allocation	mt	pounds
Pacific whiting	118,649.205	261,576,721

In September 2020, NMFS implemented a 40,000 mt reapportionment of tribal whiting to the non-tribal sectors. The revised allocations were: Tribal 34,342 mt; CP 132,249 mt; MS 93,352 mt; SS 163,367 mt (85 FR 73002).

As noted in the NMFS IAD, Amendment 21-4 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (84 FR 68799) changed non-whiting groundfish allocations (i.e., Pacific ocean perch, widow rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, and canary rockfish) in the at-sea sectors to set-asides. The set-aside amounts in effect for 2020 are detailed in Table 2d (see p. 64001) in the final rule for the 2019-2020 Biennial Harvest Specifications for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery (83 FR 63970).

B. C/P Cooperative’s Actual Retained and Discarded Catch of Pacific Whiting, Salmon, Pacific Halibut, Rockfish, Groundfish, and Other Species on a Vessel-by-Vessel Basis

Table 1 provides 2020 catch data. Species are grouped per the advice of NMFS.

C. Description of the Method Used by the C/P Cooperative to Monitor Performance of Cooperative Vessels that Participated in the Fishery

Each vessel in the C/P Cooperative carries two NMFS-certified observers to monitor and account for the catch of Pacific whiting, non-target fish species, and prohibited species. Observers report each vessel's catch on a daily basis to both the NMFS Observer Program in Seattle and to Sea State, Inc. (a private, third-party catch monitoring firm).

For 2020, the C/P Cooperative contracted with Sea State, Inc. to process the observer program catch data and to provide in-season management support. Sea State and the C/P Cooperative manager provide catch reports to each C/P vessel, the C/P fleet, and the C/P Cooperative. These reports may include cumulative fleet-wide and vessel-level catch data as well as tow-by-tow summaries. Fleet managers are able to reconcile the tow-by-tow catch information provided by Sea State against their own catch records to identify possible data errors and ensure accurate catch accounting throughout the fishing season. Sea State reports also provide a mechanism to identify and avoid fishing areas where incidental catch of species of concern is occurring. The C/P Cooperative has authorized Sea State, Inc. to identify specific fishing areas to be avoided as a mechanism to reduce catch of these species. Generally, this information can also be shared with the other whiting sectors to ensure fishery-wide transparency.

Catch aboard C/P vessels is weighed using flow scales and motion-compensated platform scales. The flow scale is tested daily by the vessel to ensure the accuracy of the data collected by the NMFS-certified observer. Regulations at 50 CFR 660.15 state that vessel owners, operators, and managers are jointly and severally responsible for their vessel's compliance with the requirements specified in this section. In addition to regulatory requirements for the vessel operator, NMFS-certified observers are instructed to test the motion-compensated platform scale during their shift and to be present during testing of the flow scale.

The species composition of the catch is determined by the NMFS-certified observer. The number of C/P hauls sampled are high, at or near 100 percent, because there are two observers. C/P vessels endeavor to provide conditions that facilitate large samples of individual hauls. The use of two observers, flow and platform scales, and high rates of sampling leads to very accurate catch accounting for Pacific whiting, non-whiting groundfish, and prohibited species.

The C/P Cooperative acknowledges and agrees that minimizing incidental catch of species of concern to the extent practicable is a primary objective of the C/P Cooperative. In general, incidental catch of non-whiting species in the C/P sector is relatively low. For 2020, each C/P Cooperative member agreed to employ bycatch avoidance techniques recommended by the PWCC Board of Directors and Sea State, Inc. Non-whiting groundfish species amounts, specified in regulation as "set asides," are subdivided to C/P Cooperative members proportional to their Pacific whiting allocations. These self-imposed soft caps help control incidental catch within the C/P Cooperative to the mutual benefit of PWCC member companies.

D. Description of Any Actions Taken by the C/P Cooperative in Response to Any Vessels that Exceed Their Allowed Catch and Bycatch

In 2020, no vessels exceeded their allowed catch or bycatch amounts such that voluntary actions were unable to maintain overall bycatch within acceptable amounts. Minor adjustments to the harvest schedule may be made to accommodate the inseason needs of member vessels. For

example, one member company may choose to provide small amounts of their percentage of the annual catcher processor allocation of catch or bycatch to another member company if the former company has completed operations for the year and the latter is still active in the fishery.

E. Plans for the 2021 C/P Cooperative Fishery, Including the Companies Participating in the Cooperative, the Harvest Agreement, and Catch Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

For 2021, companies participating in the C/P Cooperative include:

AMERICAN SEAFOODS COMPANY LLC; GLACIER FISH COMPANY LLC;
TRIDENT SEAFOODS CORPORATION; STARBOUND LLC

2021 C/P Cooperative Pacific Whiting Harvest Schedule:

Member	Percentage of Annual Catcher Processor Allocation
American Seafoods Company LLC	49.4%
Trident Seafoods Corporation	29.6%
Glacier Fish Company LLC	21.0% ⁱ

2021 C/P Cooperative Catch Monitoring and Reporting Requirements:

Each member of the C/P Cooperative carries two NMFS-certified observers aboard each of its vessels to monitor and account for total catch, including catch of prohibited species. Observers report each vessel's daily catch to the NMFS Observer Program in Seattle and to Sea State.

For 2021, the C/P Cooperative will contract with Sea State, Inc. to process observer program catch data and provide in-season management support. Sea State regularly provides catch reports to each C/P vessel, the C/P fleet, and the C/P Cooperative. These reports may include cumulative fleet-wide and vessel-level catch data as well as tow-by-tow summaries.

As noted above, catch is weighed using flow scales and motion-compensated platform scales that are tested daily. The species composition of the catch is determined by the NMFS-certified observer and, because there are two observers, the number of hauls sampled is at or near 100 percent. Moreover, C/P vessels endeavor to provide conditions that facilitate large samples of individual hauls. The use of two observers, flow and platform scales, and high rates of sampling results in accurate catch accounting for whiting, non-whiting groundfish, and prohibited species.

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ⁱPursuant to the PWCC Membership Agreement, Glacier Fish Company has agreed to permit Starbound to harvest a portion of the Glacier Allocation; the PWCC Members acknowledge and agree that, for purposes of determining each party's compliance with the PWCC Membership Agreement, all whiting and bycatch in the whiting fishery harvested by Starbound shall be deemed to have been harvested by Glacier Fish Company.

Table 1. Final 2020 Catcher-Processor Sector Total Catch

	American Dynasty	American Triumph	Northern Eagle	Northern Jaeger	Ocean Rover	Alaska Ocean	Starbound	Island Enterprise	Kodiak Enterprise	Seattle Enterprise	Total
ROUND FISH (mt)											
Whiting	7,441.12	11,180.56	11,950.93	19,764.24	8,181.01	11,178.05	7,090.27	9,385.84	9,327.13	15,644.68	111,143.82
Pacific Cod	0.01	0.02		0.01	0.01		0.01		0.00		0.05
Lingcod	0.01		0.01	0.03	0.02					0.01	0.07
Pollock											0.00
Sablefish	0.88	0.74	0.47	0.92	0.19	1.08	0.36	0.70	0.53	0.62	6.49
Roundfish Unidentified	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00
FLATFISH (mt)											
Arrowtooth Flounder	0.40	0.48	0.05	1.37	0.23	0.15	0.27	0.80	0.48	0.37	4.60
Dover Sole	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.08	0.02	0.01	0.20
English Sole	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03
Petrale Sole						0.00					0.00
Starry Flounder											0.00
Other Flatfish	0.22	0.13	0.26	0.76	0.04	0.37	0.00	0.65	0.31	0.25	2.98
Pacific Sanddab		0.00								0.00	0.00
Rock Sole											0.00
Rex Sole	0.22	0.13	0.26	0.76	0.04	0.37	0.00	0.65	0.31	0.24	2.98
Flathead Sole					0.00	0.00	0.00				0.00
Slender Sole					0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Flatfish Unidentified			0.00					0.00			0.00
ROCKFISH (mt)											
Pacific Ocean Perch	0.53	0.30	0.14	0.53	0.19	0.14	0.35	0.76	0.24	1.27	4.46
Shortbelly Rockfish	0.81	0.00	0.00	1.13	0.35	0.01	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.62	2.99
Widow Rockfish	11.15	1.76	26.58	19.57	1.50	0.55	2.09	0.37	1.72	4.49	69.78
Canary Rockfish	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.10	0.03	0.04	0.09	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.43
Yellowtail Rockfish	7.32	1.99	12.46	44.52	3.33	0.15	3.48		0.79	2.30	76.34
Thornyhead Rockfish Unidentified						0.00			0.07		0.07
Shortspine Thornyhead	0.33	0.43	0.08	3.29	0.05	0.27		2.04	1.50	1.49	9.46
Longspine Thornyhead Rockfish		0.00						0.01			0.01
Dark Blotched Rockfish	1.18	0.64	23.87	1.70	0.84	1.35	0.33	1.23	0.59	2.97	34.68
Yelloweye Rockfish											0.00
Rockfish Unidentified											0.00
Minor Shelf Rockfish North	0.45	0.19	0.10	0.26	0.26	0.03	0.25	0.04	0.01	0.05	1.64
Minor Slope Rockfish North	4.72	4.52	4.61	11.38	3.18	1.34	9.73	3.37	1.82	4.87	49.54
REMAINING GROUND FISH (mt)											
Spiny Dogfish Shark	1.94	19.17	2.29	23.46	2.42	3.84	3.59	8.88	6.52	17.90	90.01
Longnose Skate	0.00		0.01		0.04			0.05		0.04	0.16
Other Groundfish	15.06	26.17	10.12	17.87	8.64	7.66	3.49	14.53	7.49	16.75	127.79
PROHIBITED and PROTECTED SPP											
Chinook Salmon (numbers of fish)	6.33	36.00	60.62	136.00	48.00	90.00	19.00	158.00	26.00	89.00	668.95
Chum Salmon (numbers of fish)		2.00							1.00		3.00
Coho Salmon (numbers of fish)											0.00
Pink Salmon (numbers of fish)											0.00
Sockeye Salmon (numbers of fish)				2.00							2.00
Steelhead (numbers of fish)											0.00
Salmon Unidentified (numbers of fish)											0.00
Pacific Halibut (mt)	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.04	0.03	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.25
Dungeness Crab (numbers of fish)											0.00
Eulachon (mt)	0.00	0.00				0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
NON-GROUND FISH SPP (mt)											
American Shad	4.72	1.97	1.93	11.23	11.46	0.00	3.12	0.01	0.00	0.00	34.46
Pacific Herring	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Humboldt Squid											0.00
Squid Unidentified	6.19	16.92	9.10	22.75	5.93	9.58	5.43	11.28	5.74	21.89	114.81
Jack Mackerel	0.79	0.07	1.20	78.15	0.01	0.01	0.76	0.35	0.02	42.20	123.56
Pacific Mackerel		0.01	0.00	2.04				0.00		2.79	4.84
Pacific Sardine		0.00				0.00				0.01	0.01
All Other Non-Groundfish	1.30	0.81	0.38	0.66	0.15	0.39	0.30	0.69	2.02	0.60	7.29