

## COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON THE NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) thanks the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff for their CPS report.

We thank NMFS staff for its work last fall refining the habitat model used to delineate the northern subpopulation and southern subpopulation of Pacific sardines. We are optimistic that the refinement of the habitat model more accurately attributes survey estimates under the two-stock hypothesis.

### **Pacific sardine science and management**

We are encouraged by the breadth of research currently underway that is useful for testing the currently prevailing hypothesis of two subpopulations of Pacific sardines (e.g., research on sardine somatic growth patterns, ageing, life history, and genetics). We strongly encourage NMFS to continue to draw on all available sources of information and research to understand the Pacific sardine stock and its distribution. NMFS continuing efforts should include not only testing the working two-stock hypothesis, but also alternative hypotheses, such as a single population with different age and size components behaving differently with changes in temperature, ocean conditions, and population. We encourage NMFS to extend efforts to share data and collaborate with Mexican management authorities to further the understanding of the sardine stock. We fully understand the use of data from any source may be limited (or results qualified) by their uncertainty.

We continue to be frustrated with the current management of only the northern subpopulation and the pace of progress toward a manageable fishery. Fishermen in southern California are observing large numbers of sardine. We believe that the stock is likely adequate to support a directed fishery, as demonstrated by the presence and stability of the ongoing directed fishery in Mexico for the last several years. Yet, we believe undertaking a revision to management at this time would be premature. The novel research currently underway is likely to be critical to the development of a management program that is robust to the complex dynamics of the Pacific sardine population.

### **Integrated West Coast Pelagic Survey**

In recent years, portions of the CPS fleet and members of the CPSAS have collaborated with the Southwest Fishery Science Center (SWFSC) survey team to maintain and improve the quality of the CPS Acoustic Trawl Method (ATM) survey. We appreciate the openness of the SWFSC ATM team to suggested improvements in the survey and the time and effort expended to improve our understanding of their survey methodology.

As the team moves toward integrating the surveys for CPS and Pacific whiting, we appreciate its commitment to ensuring that the integrity of neither survey is compromised. We can only support moving forward with this effort if the joint survey maintains the reliability of the current surveys.

We support the proposal by NOAA Fisheries to hold a hybrid workshop bringing in expertise from the science community, and the whiting and CPS fisheries. The workshop can be used to further the dialogue between the ATM team and industry and develop a plan for advancing the integrated survey in a manner that achieves both budgetary and scientific objectives.

We also ask that the ATM team move cautiously toward gear modifications. Any modification should be thoroughly trialed prior to being deployed in the survey. Industry representatives from both the CPS and Pacific whiting fisheries who have extensive experience should participate in all trials.

We are encouraged to hear that the joint survey will be conducted on an annual basis and support maintaining this frequency. The radical swings in recruitment across years for CPS stocks require annual surveys.

PFMC  
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