

**COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
 PACIFIC MACKEREL ASSESSMENT AND BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES-
 FINAL ACTION**

The Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) joined the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) to hear a presentation by Dr. Peter Kuriyama on the assessment for management of Pacific mackerel in 2023-24 and 2024-25 and the SSC discussion of the issue. The CPSAS thanks Dr. Kuriyama for his presentation and work, and the SSC for their comments.

The CPSAS notes that the SSC recommends the assessment be classified as category 2 despite some concerns with 2022 assessment. The CPSAS, with the exception of the conservation representative, concurs with the CPSMT that the Council should maintain a P* of 0.45 in setting the specifications. The CPSAS also notes that vessels in other fisheries have reported large schools of Pacific mackerel. The albacore fishery in the Pacific Northwest have seen large numbers and schools of Pacific mackerel during the last year. Also, hook-and-line fisherman in Southern California also had consistent supplies of Pacific mackerel year-round. These observations suggest that the biomass is not overestimated by the model, and support maintaining a P* of 0.45 without additional buffers.

Fishery participants also believe that maintaining a high P* is important for the fishery to have opportunities to increase catches, should the markets strengthen. Large schools close to ports are also needed for fishing, which typically only occurs when the fishery is able to support that fishing. We believe that for the fishery to remain viable, it needs opportunities within the bounds of what is scientifically supported that can be opportunistically pursued when conditions are ripe.

The CPSAS, with the exception of the conservation representative, concurs with the Pacific mackerel harvest specification recommendations of the CPSMT as described in Agenda Item G.2.a, Supplemental CPSMT Report 1 and reproduced here:

Table 1. CPSMT Proposed 2023-2024 Pacific Mackerel Harvest Specifications (in metric tons)

Biomass	55,681
OFL	11,693
ABC P*=0.45 (Category 2)	9,754
ACL (=ABC)	9,754
HG	7,871
ACT	6,871
Incidental	1,000

Table 2. CPSMT Proposed 2024-2025 Pacific Mackerel Harvest Specifications (in metric tons)

Biomass	60,785
OFL	12,765
ABC P*=0.45 (Category 2)	10,073
ACL (=ABC)	10,073
HG	8,943
ACT	7,943
Incidental	1,000

Additionally, the CPSAS recommends the management measures described by the CPSMT which are for each separate fishing year, should the directed fishery realize the annual catch target (ACT), the National Marine Fisheries Service should close the directed fishery and shift to an incidental-only fishery for the remainder of the fishing season, up to 1,000 mt, with a 45 percent incidental landing allowance when Pacific mackerel are landed with other CPS, and a 3 mt per-landing limit of Pacific mackerel when landed in non-CPS fisheries.

The conservation representative on the CPSAS raised concerns that the best available data indicate that the Pacific mackerel stock has been steadily declining over recent years and is currently at low abundance. The 2022 acoustic trawl method survey, which was not used in the 2023 stock assessment, estimated the Pacific mackerel stock in US and Mexican waters at 7,968 mt. The 2023 stock assessment indicates coastwide fishing mortality exceeded E_{msy} (30 percent) in 2018-2020 and estimates high natural mortality resulting in a large proportion of 2023 and 2024 biomass estimates being “generated fish” from model-predicted recruitment. For these reasons, the conservation representative recommends additional precaution in upcoming specifications. These concerns warrant decreasing the P* value to be more risk averse, reducing the ACL and ACT below the harvest guideline, and scheduling an update to the harvest specifications based on the upcoming 2023 acoustic trawl method survey estimate for Pacific mackerel as soon as it becomes available.

The CPSAS as a whole supports the SSC statement that the Council consider an update assessment in 2025 rather than a catch-only projection.

PFMC
06/22/23