

Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative
Amendment 20 Catcher/Processor Cooperative
Annual Report 2022

Submitted to the
National Marine Fisheries Service
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Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative Final Annual Report for 2022

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 total catch (retained and discarded) 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 2022, NMFS issued the C/P cooperative permit, which was effective on May 6, 2022. 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 2022, the proposed initial C/P sector amount of Pacific whiting (per NMFS, Initial Administrative Determination (IAD) Notice of Right to Appeal, May 6, 2022) is:

C/P sector whiting allocation	mt	pounds
Pacific whiting	112,687	248,432,309

The proposed initial allocation was made pending publication of the 2022 whiting fishery final rule, which published June 2, 2022 (87FR33442).

In September 2022, NMFS implemented a 40,000 mt reapportionment of tribal whiting to the non-tribal sectors. The revised allocations were Tribal 30,463 mt; CP 126,287 mt; MS 89,144 mt; SS 156,002 mt.

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 2022 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 2022, 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 2021, 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 2022, 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 2023 C/P Cooperative Fishery, Including the Companies Participating in the Cooperative, the Harvest Agreement, and Catch Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

For 2023, companies participating in the C/P Cooperative include:

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

2023 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%

2023 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 2023, 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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Table 1. 2022 Catcher-Processor Catch Data

	American Dynasty	American Triumph	Northern Eagle	Northern Jaeger	Alaska Ocean	Starbound	Island Enterprise	Kodiak Enterprise	Seattle Enterprise	Total
ROUND FISH (mt)										
Whiting	17,603.64	6,647.17	18,586.04	19,528.73	18,511.54	11,488.68	14,343.84	8,952.54	10,584.57	126,246.74
Pacific Cod								0.00	0.00	0.00
Lingcod				0.03		0.01	0.02		0.02	0.08
Pollock				0.01						0.01
Sablefish	17.31	9.85	34.60	11.99	11.18	4.60	8.26	3.53	9.97	111.28
Roundfish Unid	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.03		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05
	17,620.95	6,657.02	18,620.64	19,540.78	18,522.71	11,493.29	14,352.12	8,956.08	10,594.57	
FLATFISH (mt)										
Arrowtooth Flounder	11.64	0.28	15.84	7.57	4.88	1.34	5.18	1.31	5.32	53.38
Dover Sole	0.38	0.01	0.77	0.23	0.04	0.08	0.16	0.04	0.28	1.99
English Sole	0.08	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.18
Petrale Sole										0.00
Starry Flounder										0.00
Other Flatfish	6.40	1.87	6.31	4.90	3.21	2.19	4.80	1.34	5.73	36.76
Pacific Sanddab										0.00
Rock Sole										0.00
Rex Sole	6.40	1.87	6.31	4.89	3.21	2.19	4.80	1.34	5.73	36.74
Flathead Sole										0.00
Slender Sole	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Flatfish Unidentified	0.00	0.00								0.00
ROCKFISH (mt)										
Pacific Ocean Perch	3.14	1.44	1.20	9.45	0.56	1.17	0.53	0.33	0.76	18.59
Shortbelly Rockfish	0.01	0.02	0.15	3.62	0.00	0.01	1.51	0.00	0.01	5.33
Widow Rockfish	20.81	0.11	24.58	28.31	1.04	12.59	4.07	2.07	10.99	104.57
Canary Rockfish	0.15	0.00	0.08	0.33	0.03	0.03	0.50	0.06	1.99	3.17
Yellowtail Rockfish	0.55	0.00	0.29	0.67	0.00	0.32	0.03	0.72	0.94	3.52
Thornyhead Rockfish Unidentified			0.00							0.00
Shortspine Thornyhead	14.47	1.87	38.52	37.22	23.29	14.16	25.71	8.06	21.51	184.83
Longspine Thornyhead Rockfish	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.04	0.07	0.05	0.03	0.24
Dark Blotched Rockfish	6.04	3.97	8.67	16.10	3.88	3.56	5.48	2.42	7.18	57.31
Yelloweye Rockfish										0.00
Rockfish Unidentified										0.00
Minor Shelf Rockfish North	0.26	0.01	3.21	0.33	0.01	0.03	0.14	2.89	0.10	6.98
Minor Slope Rockfish North	13.94	11.64	23.29	42.69	12.38	8.38	21.94	9.98	20.12	164.36
REMAINING GROUND FISH (mt)										
Spiny Dogfish Shark	4.72	0.76	3.84	4.15	7.54	1.06	3.72	2.87	3.88	32.55
Longnose Skate	0.49	0.13	0.54	0.22	0.10	0.05	0.20	0.10	0.08	1.92
Other Groundfish	17.52	5.68	18.11	8.78	15.62	8.24	10.96	7.42	7.36	99.68
PROHIBITED and PROTECTED SPP										
Chinook Salmon (numbers of fish)	328.80	35.00	733.00	409.00	111.50	95.36	86.00	93.00	110.00	2,001.66
Chum Salmon (numbers of fish)	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Coho Salmon (numbers of fish)	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00
Pink Salmon (numbers of fish)										0.00
Sockeye Salmon (numbers of fish)										0.00
Steelhead (numbers of fish)										0.00
Salmon Unidentified (numbers of fish)			0.00							0.00
Pacific Halibut (mt)	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.06	0.04	0.02	1.05	0.00	0.03	1.30
Dungeness Crab (numbers of fish)										0.00
Eulachon (mt)	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.03
NON-GROUND FISH SPP (mt)										
American Shad	0.01		0.03	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	2.03	2.37
Pacific Herring	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.04	0.07
Humboldt Squid										0.00
Squid Unidentified	44.86	8.92	37.48	24.12	45.21	28.19	18.38	17.71	14.80	239.67
Jack Mackerel	7.24		7.28	19.84	12.69	16.24	7.12	11.80	24.12	106.33
Pacific Mackerel	2.18	0.00	1.84	1.71	3.02	0.30	1.40	2.09	2.41	14.96
Pacific Sardine	0.01		0.01	0.03	0.05	0.10	0.01	0.13	0.06	0.40
All Other Non-Groundfish	0.40	0.14	0.47	0.61	0.62	0.58	0.38	0.41	0.37	3.96

Appendix

2022 Post-season C/P Cooperative Salmon Mitigation (SMP) Report

1. Name of the SMP and SMP identification number.

Salmon Mitigation Plan for the C/P Cooperative. SMP identification number is: SMP-2022-03.

2. A comprehensive description of Chinook salmon bycatch avoidance measures used in the fishing year in which the SMP was approved, including but not limited to, information sharing, area closures, movement rules, salmon excluder use, and internal bycatch guidelines.

The C/P Cooperative implemented Bycatch Avoidance Measures (BAMs) to ensure the sector avoids Chinook salmon at all times, in all areas, and at all levels of whiting. These BAMs are considered best practices for the CP sector and will be implemented to minimize Chinook bycatch coastwide as a standard operating procedure. C/P Cooperative members and the Cooperative manager receive daily catch and bycatch reports from the C/P vessels. There is regular communication about fishery performance between members and the manager. As warranted, the C/P Cooperative and Cooperative manager adjust bycatch management protocols in response to fishery performance with the objective of minimizing overall Chinook salmon bycatch that occurs during the entirety of the C/P fishing season while seeking to fully utilize the C/P sector whiting allocation. The items listed below are specific tools and protocols used by the C/P Cooperative, Cooperative manager, and C/P vessels to minimize Chinook salmon bycatch.

- **Chinook Guideline Limit.** PWCC members will take all reasonable measures to limit Chinook bycatch Coastwide during the spring and fall whiting fisheries. Each company will manage its Chinook salmon bycatch to a threshold based on the company's whiting shares, less a buffer. If a company approaches its threshold, the members will meet to discuss whether further restrictions might be necessary or advisable to maintain Chinook salmon bycatch below these thresholds.
- **Sea State Management.** Sea State has full access to C/P whiting catch, bycatch, and location information. The members direct Sea State to issue in-season hotspot guidance about areas for specific CP vessels and/or all CP vessels to avoid. Applicable CP vessels will avoid fishing in hotspot areas for the duration of the hotspot notice.
- **Salmon Excluders.** Salmon excluders are used regularly by C/P vessels to minimize salmon bycatch, particularly when fishing inside 200 fathoms.
- **Information Exchange.** When an amount OR rate of Chinook are caught in a tow that jeopardizes the sectors ability to achieve its whiting allocation, C/P vessels are required to send a real-time report (via email) to the other PWCC members and vessels of tow location, depth, duration, time of day, whiting catch, Chinook amount, and any other relevant information.

- **Mandatory Movement.** If the number AND rate of Chinook caught in a single haul puts the sector at risk of not achieving its allocation, the vessel will move fishing locations in good faith far enough to not encounter the same fishing conditions, and perform the Information Exchange required in the preceding bullet. The specific thresholds that trigger movement are determined annually and may be adjusted by cooperative members inseason based on factors such as remaining whiting allocation, CPUE, date, Chinook bycatch, and participation level.

3. An evaluation of the effectiveness of these avoidance measures in minimizing Chinook salmon bycatch.

Avoidance and minimization of the C/P Cooperative’s Chinook salmon bycatch was good relative to the average annual amounts for the past five years, resulting in a bycatch rate below the five-year average. While the number of Chinook was slightly higher than the five year average this was because whiting catch was significantly higher than the average. This performance demonstrates that the avoidance measures used by the C/P Cooperative in 2022 were effective in minimizing Chinook salmon bycatch.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average
Chinook Salmon	2,953	2,653	669	1,539	2,002	1,963
Whiting	116,074	116,147	111,144	103,971	126,247	114,717
Rate (CHIN/mt whtg)	0.025	0.023	0.006	0.015	0.016	0.017

4. A description of any amendments to the terms of the SMP that were approved by NMFS during the fishing year in which the SMP was approved and the reasons the amendments to the SMP were made.

There were no amendments to the terms of this SMP for 2022.

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