



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Brad Pettinger, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 18, 2023
TO: Scientific and Statistical Committee
FROM: Marlene A. Bellman, Staff Officer
SUBJECT: September 2023 Council Meeting Materials

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) September 2023 meeting will be held in person from September 8 through September 14, 2023, in Spokane, Washington. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will meet **in person** with a web broadcast on Friday, September 8 and Saturday, September 9, starting at 8 a.m. each day. In addition, the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee will meet in person on Thursday, September 7, from 1 to 5 p.m. The SSC Groundfish Subcommittee plans to initially review Agenda Items G.3, G.6, and G.8, prior to the full SSC. Your meeting materials are enclosed.

Instructions for how to connect to Council and Advisory Body meetings will be posted on the Council's [September 2023 Meeting webpage](#) prior to the first day of the meeting. Upon entering the meeting remotely, please modify your entry to reflect your full identification (full name and affiliation). This additional information helps participants identify speakers during public comment. All meetings are open to the public and at least one opportunity for public comment has been scheduled for each meeting day.

This meeting is being conducted in person with a web broadcast that provides the opportunity for remote public comment. In the event an outage occurs, or technical issues arise that impact the experience of remote attendees, we will attempt to resolve them but, ultimately, we cannot guarantee that they will be resolved satisfactorily.

SSC Administrative Matters

On Friday September 8, the SSC meeting will be called to order by the SSC Chair and any designated alternates will be introduced. Next, the SSC will receive a briefing from the Council's Executive Director, Merrick Burden, to provide clarification on Council direction, informational updates, etc. The SSC will finalize their September 2023 meeting agenda and the June 2023 meeting minutes. Subcommittee assignments will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

H. Council Administrative Matters

H.9 Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

Under Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures (COPs), the SSC may be asked to review any vacant management or technical team seats which come in before the September Council meeting. As of the advance briefing book, none have been submitted. Any SSC recommendations will be offered during the Council Closed Executive Session on Saturday, September 9.

H.6 National Standards 4, 8, 9 Considerations and National Standard 1 Technical Guidance

Recent fishery management challenges related to climate change and equity and environmental justice have led NMFS to issue an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR), seeking comment on how these guidelines might be changed—in particular with respect to the named challenges. The ANPR is focused on National Standard 4 (allocation); National Standard 8 (communities); and National Standard 9 (minimization of bycatch and related mortality). With respect to National Standard 9, the ANPR also mentions some other challenges: the practicability standard for reduction of bycatch and bycatch mortality and modifications that might further decrease bycatch or bycatch mortality; and waste reduction. This ANPR is seeking comment on the scope of issues to potentially be addressed in a subsequent revision to the National Standard guidelines for NS 4, 8, or 9 and ideas on how to ensure that these National Standards remain relevant in the context of the identified challenges. NMFS made a presentation on the ANPR under open comment at the June 2023 meeting and this agenda item provides an opportunity for AB input. The comment deadline is September 12, but NMFS has indicated that they will look forward to receiving a letter from the Council as soon as possible after the September meeting.

National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) requires preventing overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, optimum yield, from managed U.S. fisheries. Evaluation of stock status with respect to overfishing is associated with a number of biological reference points and status determination criteria. Proposed changes would update technical guidance for biological reference points and status determinations. At the June 2023 SSC meeting, Dr. Richard Methot presented a draft National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Technical Memorandum document and solicited initial feedback. The SSC is requested to provide any recommendations to the Council related to Agenda Item H.6 on Wednesday, September 13.

H.10 Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The SSC will discuss future workload planning matters and report to the Council on this matter under Agenda Item H.10 scheduled for Thursday, September 14. Future workload planning may include discussion with SSC subcommittees regarding any updates to the groundfish stock assessment cycle, development of coastal pelagic species (CPS) accepted practices guidelines for stock assessments, scheduling an Ecosystem-Based Management Subcommittee meeting, and planning for the October Salmon Methodology Review. The SSC statement regularly provides a table with important meeting dates and timelines.

C. Salmon Management

C.2 Methodology Review – Final Topic Selection

In April 2023, [five topics](#) were identified as candidate items for review. The Salmon Technical Team (STT) and SSC will report on the topic readiness for review at this meeting, and the Council will prioritize the topics for the October Salmon Methodology Review. In November, the STT and SSC will provide to the Council the results of the review and any recommendations for change, as needed. The SSC will provide any recommendations under Agenda Item C.2 on Saturday, September 9.

C.3 Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 24: Southern Resident Killer Whale Chinook Threshold Clarifications

The Council is scheduled to adopt for public review proposed changes to the Pacific Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) under Amendment 24. The proposed revision is in section 6.6.8 of the current FMP which covers management measures for Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW). It was anticipated when the SRKW management measures were adopted that the models used to determine the threshold would be periodically updated and may result in a change to the numerical value of the Chinook threshold. The proposed language does not suggest any change to the methods or analysis used in determining the threshold. The proposed revision is intended to clarify the process for alerting the Council of any potential changes to the numerical value of the Chinook abundance threshold. The SSC will provide any recommendations under Agenda Item C.3 on Saturday, September 9.

G. Groundfish Management

G.3 Stock Assessment Methodology Review – Final Topics

The SSC will review new methodologies proposed to inform future groundfish stock assessments, per Council Operating Procedure 25 ([COP 25](#)). The SSC will recommend to the Council if proposed methodologies merit a formal review during the next year. They will also inform the Council if expertise outside the SSC will be needed for any methodology review topic they recommend. The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.3 on Sunday, September 10.

G.2 Adopt Stock Assessments

Under this agenda item, the SSC will review and consider endorsing new groundfish stock assessments, catch-only updates, and other assessment analyses as best scientific information available for management decision-making for fisheries in 2025 and beyond. The Council is scheduled to approve assessments and relevant analyses used to set groundfish harvest specifications for the upcoming biennial management period (2025-2026). In the event it is necessary to reconsider any assessment or new projections, the SSC's Groundfish Subcommittee is scheduled to convene a mop-up panel during the last week of September 2023. The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.2 on Sunday, September 10.

G.6 Initial Harvest Specifications and Management Measure Actions for 2025-2026

The Council will begin deciding groundfish harvest specifications for 2025-2026 groundfish fisheries at this meeting. The SSC will review the proposed OFLs, stock categories, and sigma values (σ – scientific uncertainty), and make their recommendations to the Council.

Under Amendment 24, the default harvest control rules (HCR) are applied to the best available scientific information to determine the 2025 and 2026 OFLs, acceptable biological catches (ABC), and annual catch limits (ACL). Agenda Item G.6 Attachment 1 provides the proposed 2025 and 2026 OFLs, ABCs based on the SSC's default sigmas for each stock category and the Council's default overfishing probabilities (P*s – probability of overfishing) from the 2023-2024 management cycle, and ACLs that comport with the Council's default HCRs. The SSC will provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.6 on Tuesday, September 12.

G.7 Final Trawl Cost Project Phase 1 Report and Next Steps for the Trawl Catch Share and Allocation Reviews

An initial Trawl Cost Project Phase 1 report was presented at the April 2023 Council meeting, and a final draft is provided now as Agenda Item G.7 Attachment 1. The Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) Economics Subcommittee provided a subcommittee report from their online meeting on May 11, 2023 to review the initial draft report and provided initial feedback to the contractor. The full SSC is now requested to provide recommendations under Agenda Item G.7 on Tuesday, September 12.

G.8 Harvest Specifications Technical Corrections and Inseason Adjustments – Final Action

In late July 2023, Council staff were notified by the Northwest Fishery Science Center (NWFSC) of a technical error in the 2023-2024 harvest specifications for yelloweye rockfish. Subsequent to this notification, Council staff and NWFSC staff initiated a review of the 2023-2024 harvest specifications for all managed groundfish. This review process resulted in finding harvest specifications for canary, squarespot, darkblotched rockfishes are incorrect for the 2023-2024 biennium as well. Additionally, it appears as if the coastwide apportionment for sablefish was incorrectly calculated. Council Staff and NWFSC Staff developed a report (Agenda Item G.8 Attachment 1) which details the errors and provides the corrected harvest specifications, including allocation amounts, for these species. These corrections will require the Council to recommend technical corrections to the 2023-2024 harvest specifications to revise current regulations. The SSC should review this report, recommend revised 2023-2024 OFLs and ABCs based on the default HCR under Agenda Item G.8 on Tuesday, September 12.

I. Highly Migratory Species Management

I.5 Highly Migratory Species Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Amendment – Preliminary

At this meeting, the Council is considering proposed modifications to Highly Migratory Species (HMS) EFH. A document summarizing proposed changes is provided as Agenda Items I.5 Attachments 1 (a summary of proposed changes) and 2 (an updated HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Appendix F, which includes life history summaries and EFH descriptions). The SSC is asked to evaluate whether the scientific literature and other information represent an adequate basis for making EFH decisions. For example, the distribution maps are from distribution data compiled by the International Union for Conservation for Nature (IUCN) rather than utilizing species distribution models, with rationale provided in Attachment 1 to support using the IUCN maps.

At this meeting, the Council will consider the information provided in Attachments 1 and 2 and adoption of the package for public review. Final action is tentatively scheduled for November 2023. Overall, the Council requests the SSC provide a recommendation regarding the scientific basis to define HMS EFH under Agenda Item I.5 on Wednesday, September 13.

Thank you all for your dedication to West Coast fishery management and the Council process.

MAB:rdd

Enclosures include:

Council Call to Order (A) and SSC Administrative Matters (H)

1. Agenda Item A – Council Meeting Agenda and Executive Directors Report
2. Agenda Item H.6– National Standards 4, 8, 9 Considerations and National Standard 1 Technical Guidance
3. Agenda Item H.9 – Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures
4. Agenda Item H.10 – Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

Salmon Management (C)

5. Agenda Item C.2 – Methodology Review – Final Topic Selection
6. Agenda Item C.3 – Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 24: Southern Resident Killer Whale Chinook Threshold Clarifications

Groundfish Management (G)

7. Agenda Item G.2 – Adopt Stock Assessments
8. Agenda Item G.3 – Stock Assessment Methodology Review – Final Topics
9. Agenda Item G.6 – Initial Harvest Specifications and Management Measure Actions for 2025-2026
10. Agenda Item G.7 – Final Trawl Cost Project Phase 1 Report and Next Steps for the Trawl Catch Share and Allocation Reviews
11. Agenda Item G.8 – Harvest Specifications Technical Corrections and Inseason Adjustments – Final Action

Highly Migratory Species Management (I)

12. Agenda Item I.5 – Highly Migratory Species Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Amendment – Preliminary

SSC Agenda, Draft SSC Minutes, Closed Session, Etc.

13. September 2023 SSC Groundfish Subcommittee Agenda and SSC Agenda
14. Draft June 2023 SSC Minutes
15. SSC Supplemental Materials
16. Closed Session
17. Informational Reports
18. General Information and Council Roster