

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON PACIFIC  
SARDINE ASSESSMENT, HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT  
MEASURES – FINAL ACTION

The Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) reviewed the documents under Agenda Item G.3 ([Attachment 1](#), [Attachment 2](#), [Attachment 3](#)) for the northern subpopulation of Pacific sardine. The CPSMT also reviewed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) report recommending an overfishing limit (OFL) and corresponding acceptable biological catch (ABC) values for 2025-2026 harvest specifications ([Agenda Item G.3.a Supplemental SSC Report 1](#)).

The age 1+ biomass estimated from the 2025 update assessment is projected to be 30,158 mt on July 1, 2025. The SSC recommended a Tier 2 sigma and an OFL of 4,645 mt for the 2025-2026 fishing season based on the age 1+ biomass estimate. The stock remains below the CUTOFF value of 150,000 mt of age 1+ biomass; therefore, the CPS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) dictates that the primary directed fishery be closed for the 2025-2026 fishing year. This does not prohibit exempted fishing permits (EFPs), incidental catch, minor directed catch, or catch for live bait, recreational, and tribal fisheries.

The CPSMT recommends setting the annual catch limit (ACL) equal to 2,200 mt, consistent with the recommendations for the revised Pacific sardine rebuilding plan adopted by the Council in November 2024 ([Agenda Item J.2](#)). NMFS published a Notice of Availability on March 12, 2025 (90 FR 11817) and will issue a decision on the rebuilding plan by June 1, 2025.

The CPSMT recommends a P\* value of 0.45 to account for the risk of exceeding the OFL. With an OFL of 4,645 mt, an ACL of 2,200 mt, and the closure of the directed commercial fishery, the risk of exceeding the OFL is very low. Landings have averaged less than an ACL of 2,200 mt since the directed fishery was closed in the 2015–2016 fishing year. Daily data collection now facilitates the monitoring of landings if they approach the ACL so that management can respond quickly, resulting in a very low risk of exceeding the ACL.

Using a P\* value of 0.45 produces an ABC of 3,957 mt for the 2025-2026 fishing year. The CPSMT recommends an annual catch target (ACT) of 2,000 mt for the 2025-2026 fishing year (Table 1). This accommodates recent levels of sardine harvest in CPS fisheries and incidental harvest in non-CPS fisheries, as well as the proposed 520 mt from the EFP request ([Agenda Item G.2 Attachment 1](#)). Although recent landings have been below 2,000 mt, the proposed ACL is the lowest it has ever been. Setting an ACT of 2,000 mt would establish a trigger for accountability measures to prevent exceeding the ACL of 2,200 mt. If the ACL were to be reached, sardine harvest would be prohibited in all CPS and non-CPS fisheries.

The CPSMT also recommends the accountability measures listed below to prevent exceeding the ACL. The CPSMT notes that all sources of catch, including any EFP research set-asides, the live bait fishery, incidental catch in CPS and non-CPS fisheries, and minor directed fishing, will be accounted for against the ACL. These recommended harvest specifications align with the proposed revised rebuilding plan for Pacific sardine. Table 2 in this report summarizes the levels

of sardine catch in CPS and non-CPS fisheries for the most recent fishing seasons.

The biomass estimate is below the Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) of 50,000 mt. The CPS FMP allows the incidental landing limit to range up to 20 percent when the stock is below the MSST. The CPSMT conferred with the CPSAS and agrees that a 20 percent limit should be set to provide the maximum flexibility for other CPS fisheries.

**Table 1. 2025-2026 Scientific and Statistical Committee recommended OFL, CPSMT-recommended P\* Buffer, ABC, ACL, and ACT.**

OFL	4,645 mt
P* Buffer	0.45
ABC <sub>Tier 2</sub>	3,957 mt
ACL	2,200 mt
ACT	2,000 mt

#### **CPSMT-Recommended Accountability Measures**

1. Incidental landing limit in CPS fisheries of 20 percent.
2. If the ACT of 2,000 mt is attained, a per trip limit of 1 mt of Pacific sardine applies to all CPS fisheries.
3. An incidental per landing allowance of 2 mt of Pacific sardine in non-CPS fisheries until the ACL is reached.

**Table 2. Pacific sardine landings (mt) by fishery and harvest specifications for previous sardine fishing seasons (July 1-June 30) from PacFIN. All values are rounded to the nearest whole number.**

<b>Fishing Season</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022 - 2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>CPS Incidental</b>	131	186	149	172	176
<b>Non-CPS Incidental<sup>1</sup></b>	< 1	30	15	3	< 1
<b>EFP</b>	976	340	201	359	34
<b>Live Bait</b>	1,308	1,192	1,151	1,102	714
<b>Tribal</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Minor Directed</b>	82	34	77	105	14
<b>Total</b>	2,498	1,782	1,592	1,739	939
<i>ACT</i>	<i>4,000</i>	<i>3,000</i>	<i>3,800</i>	<i>3,600</i>	<i>5,500</i>
<i>ACL</i>	<i>4,288</i>	<i>3,329</i>	<i>4,274</i>	<i>3,953</i>	<i>6,005</i>

<sup>1</sup>Non-CPS incidental includes at-sea Pacific whiting total mortality

<sup>2</sup>2024-2025 data as of March 31, 2025 and subject to change