

SUPPLEMENTAL COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
PACIFIC SARDINE HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR
2026-27 – FINAL ACTION

The estimate of the northern subpopulation (NSP) of Pacific sardine produced by the acoustic-trawl survey (66,640 mt) is substantially over the 50,000 mt minimum stock size threshold (MSST), while the 2025 update assessment (Attachment 1) estimated the stock below that MSST. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) noted in its deliberations that the absence of age 1+ biomass estimates prevented them from recommending a biomass estimate greater than that generated by the 2025 assessment. We ask that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) explore potential paths for the survey to produce estimates of age 1+ biomass (including a methodology for generating a reliable estimate of the age 1+ biomass from the survey, such as applying a maximum age 0 size rule to sampled catches) that can be directly applied in the specifications process. In considering whether to develop a methodology for using direct use of survey data for these biomass estimates, the Council should consider the effects on the timeline for development of management of a coastwide sardine fishery and the extent to which effort put towards generating these survey estimates may impact the workload related to the development of that new coastwide management and reduce the need for an assessment in 2027. If a 2027 assessment is unnecessary, this could also further alleviate workload for staff also working on development of new management.

We support the following recommendations:

P* Buffer: 0.45

Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC_{tier3}): 3,613 mt

Annual Catch Limit (ACL): 2,200 mt

Annual Catch Target (ACT): 2,100 mt

The Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Advisory Subpanel recommends a 2,100 mt ACT which would provide flexibility to participants before the potential accountability measures are triggered.

We also support the CPS Management Team Recommended Accountability Measures:

1. Incidental landing limit in CPS fisheries of 20 percent.
2. If the ACT of 2,100 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.

We recommend that the Council approve the 520 mt proposed to be allocated to the California Wetfish Producers Association Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP; F.3 Attachment 1). Participants in the EFP will rigorously manage catches to limit the potential for EFP to impact other fisheries by reaching the ACT.