



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Pete Hassemer, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

May 22, 2026

Re: A.4 Executive Director's Report

Dear Council - The Executive Director's Report to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council, PFMC) provides updates on select administrative matters, Council activities, staffing, and other developments not otherwise captured in briefing book materials. I have also taken the liberty of highlighting matters that may be of unique interest to you as part of this report.

Changes to Council Roster

In April, Mr. Barry Thom confirmed that Mr. Chris Oliver will no longer be serving as one of his designees for the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. I'd like to thank Mr. Oliver for his engagement with the Council and our various committees over the last few years and for his contributions to west coast fisheries management.

Alternates at this Meeting

There are several alternate appointments at this meeting, as indicated in the table below:

Advisory Body	Seat	Alternate Name
GMT	West Coast Region	Megan Mackey
GMT	West Coast Region	Lynn Massey
GAP	Trawl At Large	Mark Cooper
GAP	Trawl At Large	Heather Mann
GAP	Conservation	Seth Atkinson
SSC	NMFS SWFSC	EJ Dick
EC	USCG – SW	Joe Pulice

Informational Reports

There are several informational reports available that may be of interest to:

- Informational Report 1: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Seafood
 - Informational Report 2: Highly Migratory Species drift gillnet bycatch performance report
 - Informational Report 3: California Department of Fish and Wildlife Dungeness crab pop up gear flyer
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Future Council Meeting Schedule

Due to hotel availability and scheduling considerations, the planned dates for the September 2027 Council meeting have been adjusted slightly from the previously anticipated schedule. Updated meeting dates are reflected in the General Information section of this briefing book and will be reflected in our future meeting notices and scheduling materials.

Staffing and Administrative Updates

The Council has experienced several staffing and administrative transitions in recent months. As part of these changes, Mr. Craig Hess has informed the Council that he intends to step back from driving the Council van to our meetings in the coming months.

Mr. Hess has provided many years of dependable service supporting Council operations and meeting logistics, including extensive travel responsibilities associated with transporting Council materials and equipment between meeting locations. The Council office greatly appreciates Craig's dedication, professionalism, and longstanding commitment to supporting the Council process.

This transition may affect future Council meeting planning and logistics, particularly for meeting locations farther from the Council office, including southern California venues. Staff will continue evaluating meeting location options with these operational considerations in mind.

In addition, I was only able to briefly introduce our newest staff officer, Ms. Alyssa Seibt, at the April meeting as she had just started work with us the day prior before the April meeting. Alyssa has filled the role of Staff Officer for Socioeconomics, and in this capacity, she will play an important role for us in groundfish and salmon management, and perhaps more. She is already playing an important role in moving our midwater trawl exempted fishing permit into regulation. Alyssa received her Master of Science degree in Applied Economics from Oregon State University and was highly recommended to me by several close colleagues. If you have a chance at this meeting, please help to welcome Alyssa to the Council.

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Draft Management Plan

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has published a draft management plan as part of a [management plan review](#) for Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary and has invited the Council to comment. This release also includes a draft environmental assessment which evaluates the environmental impacts of implementing the draft management plan and continued implementation of existing sanctuary regulations and activities. NOAA is soliciting public comments on the draft management plan and draft environmental assessment through July 11, 2026.

The draft management plan addresses four priority themes: 1) Achieve Effective Collaborative and Coordinated Management; 2) Conduct Collaborative Research, Assessments, and Monitoring to Support Management of Resources in the Sanctuary; 3) Improve Ocean Literacy: Education and Outreach; and 4) Conserve Resources in the Sanctuary. Consistent with the January 2023 [Notice of Intent](#), NOAA is not proposing sanctuary regulatory modifications at this time. The Council is invited to submit input regarding this draft management plan.

Pacific Sardine Management and Assessment Update

At the April meeting, some of you expressed an interest in being kept up to date on progress regarding a Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendment item. There has not been enough progress to warrant an agenda item at this meeting, however some progress has occurred.

Consistent with guidance provided by the Council at its April meeting, Council and staff, including staff from the National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region and Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC), are reviewing management provisions in the CPS FMP to determine whether reference points and management criteria for Pacific sardine should be revised to reflect the Council's adoption of the iFPA stock definition for a coastwide stock. As part of this effort, the CPS Subcommittee of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), CPS Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) advisors, and the CPS Management Team (CPSMT) are expected to meet at the SWFSC in La Jolla during the week of July 20 to evaluate management approaches for a coastwide stock. The meeting will be open to the public. The SSC CPS Subcommittee is expected to focus on status determination criteria and associated parameters, while the CPSMT and CPSAS advisors will focus on harvest policy and related management measures.

In parallel, stock assessment scientists at the SWFSC are developing a coastwide biomass estimate to support management for the 2027–2028 fishing season and are continuing work on a coastwide benchmark assessment model anticipated for use beginning with the 2028–2029 fishing season. Based on the current schedule and ongoing progress, it appears we are on track to consider and potentially adopt a Range of Alternatives and Preliminary Preferred Alternative for the broader FMP amendment package at its September 2026 meeting.

Other Items of Potential Interest

After last year's uncertainty about our fiscal status, I know many of you are interested in budget/fiscal updates as they occur. As of the date of this report, we have received all of our anticipated funding for the year. This is welcome relief to many of us and it is clear that the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, Mr. Eugenio Piñeiro Soler, has played a large role in making sure the Councils have fiscal stability this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Merrick Burden", written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Merrick Burden
Executive Director