

2027 – 2028 BIENNIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES – PRELIMINARY OR FINAL ACTION

The Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) describes a biennial process in which the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) may consider and provide input on key management reference points for HMS stocks. Typically, a draft Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report is provided at the September Council meeting, with the final SAFE report provided in November. However, because biennial management was not on the Council's September 2026 agenda, the draft SAFE report will instead be provided at the November meeting as a Supplemental Report. (A regularly-updated version of the SAFE may be found on the Council website with additional information in the HMS SAFE Portal on the PacFIN website).

Chapter 8 in the SAFE contains information related to status determination criteria (SDC) for HMS stocks including a listing of the most recent stock assessments upon which status determinations are based.¹ The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) uses this information to determine whether a stock is subject to overfishing (current fishing mortality exceeds the maximum fishing mortality threshold) or overfished (current stock spawning biomass is less than the minimum stock size threshold). The Council then has an opportunity to provide input on identifying these management reference points. Table 8-1 in the draft SAFE report indicates that no FMP stocks are currently overfished or experiencing overfishing.

HMS are subject to Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Section 304(i) when the overfishing or overfished status of the stock is primarily a result of “excessive international fishing pressure.” While the Council may propose measures to address the “relative impact of fishing vessels of the United States on the stock,” the broader charge is for the Council to develop recommendations for international actions. This differs from stocks fully subject to domestic management, where determinations lead to remedial action by the Council and NMFS.

As part of the process of estimating SDC and making stock status determinations, NMFS considers whether these stock assessments constitute the best scientific information available. This occurs once the regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs) have adopted the assessments for management. NMFS will provide revised SDC estimates in a supplemental report. The HMS Management Team (HMSMT) will review the key reference points and may recommend additional review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Through two meetings (November 2026 and March of 2027), the Council may make recommendations to NMFS about any revised SDC estimates, as appropriate.

¹ Stock assessments for species listed in the HMS FMP are conducted by Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission scientific staff and the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific (ISC). The ISC conducts stock assessments and provides conservation advice formally through an agreement with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Northern Committee.

Catch limits that are set for U.S. West Coast domestic fisheries (Pacific bluefin and bigeye tuna), derive from agreements reached internationally through the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. While the Council is not prohibited from establishing catch control measures through this biennial process, NMFS implements internationally-agreed catch limits under Tuna Conventions Act authority, not the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Any measures proposed by the Council would have to be consistent with catch limits implemented by NMFS.

At this meeting, the Council should review supplemental reports from NMFS and the HMSMT, as well as the draft SAFE document, and adopt recommendations regarding management reference points, status determination criteria, and stock status determinations for stocks managed under the HMS FMP. If additional consideration is needed, the Council may revisit these matters at its March 2027 meeting.

The Council also may propose changes to regulations promulgated pursuant to the HMS FMP. Any fishery management measures under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act would need to be proposed at this meeting and considered for final action at the March 2027 meeting. Accordingly, the Council should identify any proposed management measures at this meeting for consideration and potential final action in March 2027.

Council Tasks:

- 1. Review Reference Point Values and Make Recommendations on Their Use in Determining Stock Status.**
- 2. Adopt Numerical Estimates of Maximum Sustainable Yield, Optimum Yield, and Stock Status Information.**
- 3. Consider the Need to Develop Annual Catch Limits or Other Harvest Objectives and/or Management Measures.**

Reference Materials:

1. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- I.4 Biennial Harvest Specifications and Management Measures – Final Kerry Griffin
 - a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Reference Point Values and Stock Status Determination Criteria, as Appropriate; Consider the Need to Develop Annual Catch Limits or Other Harvest Objectives and/or Management Measures.

PFMC
10/27/26