

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT: REVISED SARDINE STOCK AND MANAGEMENT PROVISIONS – FINAL ACTION

At this meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduled to adopt a final preferred alternative (FPA) to amend the Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan (CPS FMP) and revise the Pacific sardine stock definition to align with new science and specify management provisions for that stock.

While current management follows best scientific information available (BSIA) to date, this action has been driven by new scientific information regarding the population dynamics of Pacific sardine that indicates Pacific sardine off the west coast of North America comprise a single population. In November 2025, the Council scoped an action to revise the stock definition specified in the CPS FMP, adopting a purpose and need statement as well as a range of alternatives (ROA) and preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for the stock definition. In April 2026, the Council adopted an interim final preferred alternative (iFPA) for the stock definition. Under the iFPA, the revised definition would include the entire portion of the Pacific sardine population in U.S. waters. Doing so would align the stock definition with BSIA, meeting the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and related National Standards (NS).

Reference Points and Alternatives

Councils must evaluate and describe reference points for stocks in their FMPs to prevent overfishing and achieve optimum yield (OY), specifically through conservation and management measures and status determination criteria (SDC). Therefore, this action included consideration of these requirements, the NS, technical guidance (as available), and how each applies to the management provisions for a revised Pacific sardine stock. This consideration included a review of management provisions by Council and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff as well as a joint advisory body meeting involving the Scientific and Statistical Committee's CPS subcommittee (SSC-CPSSC), the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) and representatives of the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS). This review concluded that the "more intensive" or "general control rule" management framework defined in the CPS FMP (Section 4.6.3) could be applied to the revised stock, with adjustments to control rules and parameters (i.e., CUTOFF and DISTRIBUTION) where appropriate, and the specification of a minimum stock size threshold (MSST) for the U.S. Pacific sardine stock.

In September 2026, the Council adopted an ROA and PPA for the remainder of the FMP Amendment components, including these management provisions. The Council's stated objective in adopting an ROA and PPA was for the FMP amendment to "[maintain] the current harvest approach and [adapt] it to the new science on stock structure."

The complete ROA consists of two alternatives, each addressing both the stock definition and management provision components:

No Action

- Maintains the status quo stock definition and management for Pacific sardine, as specified for the northern subpopulation (NSP) of Pacific sardine.

Alternative 1 (PPA)

- Would revise the stock definition to a U.S. Pacific sardine stock and specify management provisions for that stock.
- Applies the “more intensive” management framework in Section 4.6.3 of the CPS FMP
 - Retains the overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rules, revising the DISTRIBUTION term to 1,
 - Applies the harvest guideline (HG) control rule,
 - Continues to set annual catch limits (ACLs), annual catch targets (ACTs), and management measures on an annual basis as needed.

Within Alternative 1, there are several options for specifying MSST:

- a) **Static Value:** $MSST = X \text{ mt age 1+ biomass or reasonable proxy consistent with BSIA}$
Option a.i.: $MSST = 65,000 \text{ mt age 1+ biomass or reasonable proxy}$
Option a.ii.: $MSST = 150,000 \text{ mt age 1+ biomass or reasonable proxy}$
- b) **Formulaic (PPA):** $MSST = 10\%B_0 - 30\%B_0$ (where X% is determined upon BSIA), or other reasonable proxy

Within Alternative 1, there are several options for specifying the CUTOFF parameter: 50,000 mt, 150,000 mt (PPA), or 314,400 mt.

The Council also provided additional direction on next steps for Pacific sardine management. This included a benchmark assessment for the revised stock and continued discussions on science and sardine management in 2028, as well as additional analyses such as a management strategy evaluation following the benchmark assessment, and increased efforts from NMFS to improve scientific capacity for Pacific sardine in Mexico.

Next Steps and Council Action

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to adopt an FPA for the FMP amendment and related FMP text. The information available to support Council decision making is summarized in Attachment 1. The impact analysis and MSA analysis comparing the alternatives is available in Attachment 2. NMFS Report 1 provides a summary of technical information to support Council decision making. Draft language for the FMP amendment under the Council’s PPA is proposed in Attachment 3.

Council Tasks:

1. **Adopt a Final Preferred Alternative for the FMP Amendment including Options, as applicable.**
2. **Adopt FMP Amendment language.**
3. **Provide direction on next steps for Pacific sardine management, as appropriate.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item J.3, Attachment 1: Summary of Information Available for Council Decision Making on FMP Amendment: Revised Sardine Stock and Management.

2. Agenda Item J.3, Attachment 2: Draft Impact Analysis/MSA Analysis for the Proposed Amendment to the Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan to Revise the Pacific Sardine Stock Definition (***Electronic Only***).
3. Agenda Item J.3, Attachment 3: CPS FMP, Excerpts Proposed for Revision (***Electronic Only***).
4. Agenda Item J.3.a, NMFS Report 1: NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center Report on Technical Summaries for Pacific Sardine Stock Revision.
5. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- J.3 Fishery Management Plan Amendment: Revised Sardine Stock and Management Provisions – Final Action Katrina Bernaus
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Preferred Alternative including Fishery Management Plan Language

PFMC

10/26/26