

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE JUNE 2001 MEETING

Groundfish Management

Sablefish Three-Tier Program, Qualification with Setnet Landings

The Council took final action to alter the qualification criteria for limited entry fixed gear sablefish tiers. The Council passed a motion allowing setnet landings of sablefish taken under an Exempted Fishing Permit north of 38° latitude during 1984-87 to be considered in determining tier placement for fixed gear permits already endorsed for sablefish.

Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Applications

The Council passed motions recommending that NMFS approve three Exempted Fishing Permit applications that involve full observer coverage and many other restrictions and requirements:

- (1) Seven permits for trawl fishing north of 48° latitude to demonstrate the ability to target arrowtooth flounder with minimal incidental catch of canary rockfish;
- (2) Five permits in Northern California to demonstrate the selectivity of vertical hook and line gear in targeting yellowtail rockfish while avoiding canary rockfish;
- (3) Five permits for trawl fishing off California to demonstrate the ability to target chilipepper rockfish while avoiding bocaccio rockfish.

Limited Entry Fixed Gear Sablefish Permit Stacking and Season for 2001 and Beyond

The Council clarified its intent with respect to seven ancillary elements of the Permit Stacking Program, such as owner-on-board and advance notice of landing requirements, which will not be fully implemented until 2002. The Council was advised the basic provisions of the Permit Stacking Program will be in place for the 2001 season, and the season is expected to begin August 15 and close October 31.

Incidental Pacific Halibut Harvest Restrictions for the Primary, Limited Entry Longline Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis, Washington

The Council adopted an allowance for the retention of incidentally caught halibut in the primary 2001 limited entry sablefish longline fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington. This allowance is as follows:

Properly licensed vessels may return and land 80 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to two additional halibut in excess of the 80 pounds per 1,000 pound ratio per landing. Each properly licensed vessel is restricted to a primary sablefish season cumulative landing limit of:

Tier 1: 2,850 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut;

Tier 2: 1,300 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut;

Tier 3: 750 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut.

Season cumulative limits apply to individual vessels regardless of the number permits stacked on the vessel.

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Groundfish Management (continued)

Strategic Plan Implementation

The Council adopted four actions associated with Groundfish Strategic Plan implementation:

- (1) Directed the Executive Director to provide a response letter in general support of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Preservation Act (S. 973) sponsored by Senator Wyden (Oregon) and appointed Council Member Ralph Brown to represent the Council at a Congressional Briefing on this matter scheduled for June 25, 2001.
- (2) Adopted a Trawl Permit Stacking development team, issues to be addressed by the team, and schedule.
- (3) Authorized formation of a steering group to coordinate Council consideration of incoming proposals on marine reserve issues, authorized a Scientific and Statistical Committee Subpanel to evaluate scientific issues related to marine reserve size, and directed the Executive Director to aggressively pursue funding options for the Council to take a lead role in establishing future West Coast Marine Reserves.
- (4) Approved Strategic Plan Implementation Oversight Committee recommendations for developing an analysis of the measures needed to convert the open access fishery to a limited entry fishery.

Rebuilding Plans

The Council postponed final adoption of rebuilding plans, providing Council staff guidance on additional analysis and elements in the areas of bycatch and habitat, and scheduling further review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee and Groundfish Management Team. A preliminary optimum yield range of 726 mt – 856 mt was adopted for the widow rockfish rebuilding plan scheduled for adoption in November.

Preliminary Harvest Levels for 2002

The Council postponed adoption of preliminary allowable biological catch and optimum yield levels until the September Council Meeting, with the exception of widow rockfish (726 mt – 856 mt).

Status of Fisheries and Inseason Adjustments

The Council adopted several inseason trip limit changes to ongoing commercial Limited Entry Trawl and Fixed Gear Sablefish fisheries. Some changes curtailed existing trip limits and other changes represented increases. Complete details about the changes for the species and the various areas and gear types involved can be found on the Council website in the near future.

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE JUNE 2001 MEETING

Groundfish Management (continued)

Full Retention Measures

The Council authorized appointment of a subcommittee to analyze options and prepare a recommendation for a full retention pilot program. The subcommittee will consist of representative of the Groundfish Management Team, Groundfish Advisory Subpanel and Enforcement Consultants. The subcommittee will meet during the week of August 6, 2001 and present a recommendation at the September Council Meeting.

American Fisheries Act Management Measures

The Council directed staff to include an additional option and an additional analysis to complete the draft presented at this meeting, and to prepare a complete analysis for Council consideration at the September Council Meeting.

Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement

The Council approved formation of an ad-hoc subcommittee of Council members to review the development of the Environmental Impact Statement on the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. Membership to and terms of reference for the subcommittee will be established at the September Council Meeting.

Marine Reserves

Marine Reserves in the Channel Island National Marine Sanctuary

The Council did not receive a proposal for fishing closures related to marine reserves within the Channel Islands Sanctuary, and therefore took no action. There is an expectation that a specific proposal will be forthcoming from the State of California or the ongoing Channel Islands Process for consideration at the September meeting.

Highly Migratory Species Management

Public Review Draft of the HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP)

The Council revised the schedule to adopt a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Highly Migratory Species and further defined the organization of the FMP content. The revised schedule includes a status update at the September Council Meeting, release of a draft FMP for full public review at the November Council Meeting, public hearings during January 2002 and February 2002, and final adoption of an FMP at the March 2002 Council Meeting. The FMP will include (1) a framework of significant fixed elements, such as allowable commercial gear, harvest control rules, and an exempted fishing permit process; and (2) concurrent adoption of specific regulations, such as Endangered Species Act requirements and certain state regulations. Later, other major elements will be adopted through rulemaking.

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Coastal Pelagic Species Management

Pacific Mackerel Harvest Guideline and Other Specifications for 2002

Based on the most recent biomass estimate (84,090 mt), the Council recommended a harvest guideline (HG) of 13,837 mt, which will be the HG for the season July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002. The Council also adopted the following guidelines for prosecuting the Pacific mackerel fishery in 2001-2002: 1) open the directed fishery on July 1, 2001 with a HG of 13,837 mt; 2) close the directed fishery when 6,000 mt of the HG has been landed; 3) switch to an incidental tolerance of up to 45% Pacific mackerel in other CPS fisheries, or up to 1 mt of Pacific mackerel at any percentage; 4) the Council's CPS management team will report fishery status to the Council at the March 2002 and April 2002 meetings; 5) if a significant portion of the HG remains in either March or April, a directed "mop-up" fishery may be re-opened in April, May, or June.

Market Squid Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) Methodology Review Workshop

The Council heard preliminary reports from the Scientific and Statistical Committee and Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) about the workshop to review market squid assessment methodologies. A final report from the workshop panel is expected by the end of July 2001. The Council urged the CPSMT and Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel to develop a recommendation for a market squid MSY (or MSY proxy prior to the September 2002 Council meeting, for possible incorporation into Amendment 10 to the Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan.

Administrative and Other Matters

Appointment to the Groundfish Management Team

The Council appointed Dr. Kevin Piner to the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center vacancy on the Groundfish Management Team. Dr. Piner is a member of the Fishery Resource Analysis and Monitoring Division at the Center.