

COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE JUNE 15-20, 2003 MEETING

GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT

Observer Data Implementation Status

The Council recommended that NMFS provide, at the November Council Meeting, a schedule showing when new observer data will be processed and presented to the Council for fishery management decision-making over the course of the upcoming multi-year management cycle.

The Council also recommended the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discuss a solution to the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) concern over the need to standardize the methodologies used by Oregon, Washington, and California to adjust hailed weights from their annual logbook data, so as to improve timeliness and accuracy of bycatch estimates.

Stock Assessments and Rebuilding Analyses for 2004 Groundfish Management

The Council adopted stock assessments for Pacific ocean perch, widow rockfish, bocaccio, black rockfish, yellowtail rockfish, cowcod, and darkblotched rockfish for use in 2004 groundfish management decision-making. Additionally, new rebuilding analyses for Pacific ocean perch, widow rockfish, bocaccio, and darkblotched rockfish were adopted for use in 2004 groundfish management decision-making and for development of species rebuilding plans.

Preliminary Range of Harvest Levels for 2004

A preliminary range of optimum yield harvest levels for 37 groundfish stocks and stock complexes were adopted for analysis and public review. The preliminary range of 2004 harvest levels will be included in the summer Council newsletter and posted on the Council website in the near future. Final harvest levels for 2004 groundfish management will be decided at the next Council meeting in September.

Standards and Criteria for Approving Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs)

The Council provided guidance for further work from the GMT in developing a Council Operating Procedure for standards and criteria for approving exempted fishing permits and tasked the GMT with reporting their results at the September Council meeting.

Groundfish Inseason Management

Responding to the current fishery status, updated estimates of total fishing-related mortality, and a more optimistic assessment of bocaccio, the Council made inseason recommendations to adjust West Coast groundfish fisheries. Adjustments include allowing recreational fisheries and commercial fixed gear fisheries south of Point Conception (34°27' N latitude) to

fish inside of 30 fathoms beginning September 1, providing expanded nearshore trawl areas in July and August coast wide, adjusting fixed gear cumulative limits in nearshore areas coast wide, adjusting trawl cumulative limits on Dover sole, thornyheads, and sablefish coast wide, and rescinding nearshore area closures in July and August for exempted trawl fisheries south of Cape Mendocino (40°10' N latitude). Estimated impacts associated with these recommended adjustments are at or below optimum yield levels, with the exception of bocaccio. Bocaccio impacts may slightly exceed the 2003 optimum yield, but are responsive to a 10 to 26 fold increase in the optimum yield for 2004.

Implementation of a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

The Council directed staff to provide the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) statement to NMFS as the Council comments during the open public comment period on the proposed rule on the West Coast vessel monitoring system, and additionally, recommend implementation not occur prior to January 1, 2004. Also, the Council directed staff to initiate further implementation of VMS in additional fishery sectors and revised the VMS Committee membership to focus on this new area (See Administrative Matters, Appointments).

Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Process for 2005 through 2006

The Council adopted Terms of Reference for groundfish stock assessment development and review for the first biennial management period of 2005-2006. The Terms of Reference provides for new assessments for lingcod and cabezon to be adopted at the November 2003 Council meeting and a new Pacific whiting assessment to be adopted at the March 2004 Council meeting. The Council left open the possibility of a new canary rockfish assessment for use in 2005-2006 and will discuss this further at the next Council meeting in September.

Final Adoption of Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 16-1 and Amendment 16-2

The Council adopted Amendments 16-1 and 16-2 to the Groundfish FMP and directed staff to finalize the necessary documents and forward them for federal approval. Under Amendment 16-1, the Council adopted previously identified preferred options for Issue 2 (Rebuilding Plan Review) and for Issue 3 (Adequacy of Progress Standard); option 1d was selected for Issue 1 (Form and Content of Rebuilding Plans); and option 4b for Issue 4 (Endangered Species Act Considerations). Under Amendment 16-2, the Council adopted rebuilding plans for darkblotched rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, canary rockfish, and lingcod, with the Council Interim Alternatives selected as specific rebuilding targets.

Adoption of a Proposed Range of 2004 Groundfish Management Measures

The Council adopted a broad range of alternative management measures for groundfish commercial and recreational fisheries in 2004, to be analyzed over the course of the summer for final decision-making at the September Council meeting. Details on the various alternatives will be available on the Council website in the near future.

Alternative Long-term Groundfish Management Strategies

The Council indicated the intent to convene the GMT for a special meeting after the November Council meeting to develop options for alternative groundfish management strategies, with key industry representatives and Council members as invited participants.

SALMON MANAGEMENT

Mitchell Act Update

The Council directed staff to prepare a letter to NMFS and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission recommending a two-step approach to developing adequate funding for Mitchell Act implementation in FY04 and beyond. The approach consists of (1) a meeting of technical personnel from all affected agencies to develop appropriate funding levels, and (2) a meeting of agency and tribal policy representatives and stakeholders to develop a strategy for communicating with appropriate administration and congressional representatives regarding needs and benefits of the Mitchell Act Program.

HABITAT ISSUES

Current Habitat Issues

The Council reviewed two letters developed by the Habitat Committee, one to the Bureau of Reclamation on Klamath flow issues and one to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on the re-licensing of the Priest Rapids Dam. The Council approved both letters with edits.

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Pacific Mackerel Harvest Guideline for 2003 through 2004

The Council adopted the following management measures for the July 2003-June 2004 Pacific mackerel fishery:

- (1) a total fishery harvest guideline of 10,652 mt,
- (2) a directed fishery guideline of 7,500 mt,
- (3) a set-aside for incidental catches of 3,152 mt, and
- (4) an incidental catch rate limit of 40% when mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species, except that up to 1 mt can be landed regardless of total catch composition.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Potential Modification of FMP Preferred Alternative for High Seas Longline Fishing in Response to Sea Turtle Impact Analysis

After hearing a technical presentation from NMFS, advisory body statements, and public comment, the Council declined to reconsider their prior action in adopting an FMP for submission to the Secretary of Commerce; the Council will transmit the FMP in the near future with a request for a joint biological opinion on Endangered Species Act-listed species and 20% observer coverage in the high seas longline fishery. The Council also tasked the

Highly Migratory Species Plan Development Team (HMSPDT) with providing recommendations for a limited entry program for the high seas longline fishery, including a control date, a qualifying period, a qualifying landing level, a capacity goal, and permit transferability. The HMSPDT was asked to provide this report at the November 2003 Council meeting.

MARINE RESERVES

Planning for Federal Waters Portion of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS)

The Council directed staff to forward all prepared statements of its advisory bodies on the topic of marine reserves in the CINMS, as well as the April 24 letter from the Council to CINMS, as formal scoping comments to the CINMS. In addition, the Council directed that its Ad Hoc Marine Reserves Committee meet to review the CINMS preliminary draft environmental document, the draft CINMS management plan, and a summary of scoping comments provided by CINMS, and to provide recommendations to the Council as appropriate. Finally, the Council directed the chair of the SSC Marine Reserves Subcommittee to work with CINMS staff on providing clarification of earlier SSC comments on CINMS environmental documents.

Central California Sanctuary Processes Including Krill Ban

The Council heard an update on the joint management plan review process for the Monterey Bay, Gulf of the Farallones, and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries. A krill harvesting ban proposal was not reviewed at this time. The Council directed the Habitat Committee to track the Sanctuaries' progress on a proposed krill-harvesting ban.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Legislative Matters

The Council adopted the Legislative Committee report and directed staff to include the committee's recommendations in the Council newsletter. The recommendations include emphasizing to Council constituents the importance of two pieces of legislation – Senate Bill 1106, legislation for national standards for fishing quota programs; and Senate Bill 1193, which would modify the Capital Construction Fund to provide for withdrawals for fishermen leaving the industry.

Fiscal Matters

The Council adopted the Budget Committee report, which reported budget spending status and recommended meeting dates for 2006 and 2007. The adopted meeting dates will be posted on the Council website in the near future.

Appointments to Advisory Bodies, Standing Committees, and Other Forums

The Council made the following appointments to Advisory Bodies:

Salmon Technical Team: Mr. Craig Foster to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife seat replacing Mr. Curt Melcher.

Model Evaluation Workgroup:

Mr. Larrie LaVoy to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife seat;
Mr. Andy Rankis to the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission seat;
Mr. Curt Melcher to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife seat;
Mr. Dell Simmons to the National Marine Fisheries Service seat;
Mr. Henry Yuen to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seat;
Mr. Rishi Sharma to the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission seat; and
Mr. Allen Grover to the California Fish and Game seat.

Ad Hoc Vessel Monitoring System Committee:

Mr. Dayna Matthews and Mr. Joseph Albert representing NMFS enforcement;
CPT Mike Cenci representing the Enforcement Consultants Committee;
Ms. Becky Renko representing the NMFS Northwest Region;
Mr. Marion Larkin representing the limited entry trawl sector;
Mr. Don Hansen representing the California party fishing vessel sector;
Mr. Mark Cedergreen representing the northern charter boat sector;
LTJG Gregg Casad and LTJG Jordan Baldueza representing the U.S. Coast Guard;
Mr. Tom Ghio and Mr. John Crowley representing the limited entry fixed gear sector;
Mr. Kenyon Hensel and Ms. Kathy Fosmark representing the open access commercial sector; and
Mr. Rod Moore representing fish processors.

Staff Work Load Priorities and September 2003 Council Meeting Agenda

The Council adopted workload priorities for the Council staff for the period June 23-September 12, as well as a draft September agenda.