

# COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE JUNE 2005 MEETING

## ***Groundfish Management***

### **Initial Consideration of Opening Date of California Shore-based Whiting Fishery**

The Council adopted two alternatives to evaluate a change in the opening date of the California shore-based whiting fishery south of 40°30' N latitude for public review. The Council recommends opening this segment of the whiting fishery on March 15 or April 1. If ultimately adopted by the Council in September, an evaluation of the change in the opening date would begin in 2006 under an exempted fishing permit.

### **Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – Final Preferred Alternative**

The Council identified their preferred alternative to be included and analyzed in the final FEIS. The groundfish fishery management plan (FMP) will be amended to incorporate elements of this preferred alternative, and NMFS will promulgate implementing regulations by May 2006.

Elements of the Council-preferred alternative include:

- Identification of groundfish EFH as waters and associated sea bottom in depths less than 3,500 meters. Seamounts at depths greater than 3,500 meters will also be identified as groundfish EFH.
- Designation of a range of habitat types and specified areas as habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC). HAPCs provide focus when NMFS consults with other federal agencies on the impacts of activities they undertake or permit in groundfish EFH areas.
- Closing large areas of the West Coast exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to specified fishing gear, including closing all areas deeper than 700 fathoms to bottom trawl gear. Additional ecologically important areas within 700 fathoms will be closed to specified gear types.
- Prohibitions on the use of specified gear to minimize impacts to EFH.
- Support for habitat-related monitoring and research.

A complete summary of the Council-preferred alternative for the groundfish EFH EIS will be available on the Council website [www.pcouncil.org](http://www.pcouncil.org).

### **Trawl Individual Quota Program Development**

The Council adopted goals and objectives and a set of alternatives for analysis in the EIS. The alternatives included initial allocation of individual fishing quotas (IFQ) to groundfish limited entry permit owners, and potentially, processors. The alternatives do not include individual processing quotas. With respect to species coverage, the

alternatives range from all groundfish under the groundfish FMP to just those that are overfished. Individual bycatch quotas for Pacific halibut were considered, but not included in the alternatives forwarded for analysis. The Ad Hoc Trawl Individual Quota Analytical Team and Scientific and Statistical Committee were tasked with developing additional alternatives that would address the concerns of communities. A decision on the process for responding to the potential need for increased regional area management under IFQs was deferred until additional information is available. The Council directed staff to announce the Council's intent to prepare an EIS on intersector allocation as soon as possible.

### **Rebuilding Plan Revision Rules**

The Council adopted alternatives of draft rules that will trigger a revision to an overfished species' rebuilding plan when new information such as stock assessments becomes known. These rebuilding plan revision rules options will be specified on the Council website soon after the June Council meeting. Final adoption of a set of rebuilding plan revision rules is expected in September.

### **Final Consideration of Inseason Adjustments**

The Council adopted inseason adjustments to ongoing groundfish fisheries as follows:

- increased limited entry trawl trip limits for longspine and shortspine thornyheads, sablefish, and slope rockfish,
- increased open access shelf rockfish (including shortbelly, widow, and chilipepper rockfish) cumulative limits south of 34°27' N latitude from 500 pounds per 2 months to 750 pounds per 2 months for the remainder of the year,
- increased limited entry fixed gear shelf rockfish cumulative limits south of 34°27' N latitude from 2,000 pounds per 2 months to 3,000 pounds per 2 months for the remainder of the year,
- increased limited entry fixed gear and open access cumulative limits for minor nearshore rockfish and black rockfish between 40°10' and 42° N latitude from 5,000 pounds per 2 months, no more than 1,200 pounds of which may be species other than black or blue rockfish to 6,000 pounds per 2 months, no more than 1,200 pounds may be species other than black or blue rockfish between for the remainder of the year,
- increased limited entry trawl slope rockfish and splitnose limits between 38° and 40°10' N latitude from 8,000 pounds per 2 months to 20,000 pounds per 2 months for period 4, and
- changed total annual catch caps for canary and yelloweye rockfish in the directed open access fishery to 3.0 mt for each species.

These inseason adjustments are expected to be implemented on July 1, but are not final until approved by NMFS and noticed in the *Federal Register*.

## ***Salmon Management***

### **Technical Basis for the Klamath River Fall Chinook Conservation Objective**

The Council tasked the Salmon Technical Team (STT) to report on the statistical relationship between parent spawners and subsequent production, for all brood years of Klamath fall chinook that data is available. The report is to include (1) an estimate of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) based on the Ricker stock recruitment methodology, (2) a correlation analysis of brood year production and river flow hydrology conditions during the spawning period, and (3) a correlation analysis of brood year production and river hydrology conditions during the juvenile freshwater phase.

The STT will report back to the Council at the September 2005 meeting. The results of the STT analysis will be considered by the Council towards a decision on whether or not to initiate an FMP amendment to adjust the conservation objective for Klamath River fall chinook.

## ***Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management***

### **Response to Overfishing of Bigeye Tuna**

The Council moved to develop an FMP amendment addressing overfishing of bigeye tuna. NMFS Southwest Region agreed to lead in developing the FMP amendment document.

### **Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP)**

The Council reviewed one EFP application, which proposed a single-vessel test fishery for swordfish and bigeye tuna both outside and within the West Coast EEZ to demonstrate economic viability, while avoiding incidental take of endangered and threatened sea turtles. The Council recommended that NMFS not approve the application.

### **Management Regime for High Seas Longline Fishery**

The Council directed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel to develop a preliminary range of alternatives to establish measures to limit the incidental take of threatened and endangered sea turtles, while allowing a directed shallow-set swordfish fishery by HMS FMP permitted vessels. These alternatives are scheduled to be considered for adoption at the November 2005 Council meeting.

## ***Coastal Pelagic Species Management***

### **Pacific Mackerel Harvest Guideline for 2005/2006 Fishery**

The Council adopted the new assessment model and the following management measures for the July 2005-June 2006 Pacific mackerel fishery:

- (1) total fishery harvest guideline of 17,419 mt;
- (2) directed fishery guideline of 13,419 mt; and
- (3) set-aside for incidental catches of 4,000 mt and an incidental catch rate limit of 40%, when mackerel are landed with other coastal pelagic species (CPS), except that up to one mt of Pacific mackerel can be landed without landing any other CPS.

The Council requested NMFS track utilization of the directed fishery guideline and advise the Council at the March 2006 meeting if release of the incidental set-aside is warranted.

### **FMP Amendment 11 – Sardine Allocation**

The Council took final action on a long-term allocation of the annual Pacific sardine harvest guideline. The Council approved a modified version of Alternative 3, which provides the following allocation formula for the non-tribal share of the harvest guideline:

- (1) a seasonal allocation structure with 35% of the harvest guideline to be allocated coastwide on January 1;
- (2) 40% of the harvest guideline, plus any portion not harvested from the initial allocation, to be reallocated coastwide on July 1; and
- (3) on September 15 the remaining 25% of the harvest guideline, plus any portion not harvested from earlier allocations, to be reallocated coastwide.

Tribal fisheries on sardine may evolve in 2006 in waters north of Point Chehalis; if so, the non-tribal allocation formula will be applied to the remainder of the harvest guideline after accommodation of the tribal fishery. The Council also recommended a review of the allocation formula in 2008.

### **Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Document and Five-Year EFH Review**

The Council adopted the 2005 SAFE document as drafted by the CPS Management Team (CPSMT) including the required review of CPS EFH. The Council recommended no changes to the existing definition of EFH because the CPSMT review identified no new information on which to base EFH modifications. The Council agreed with the research needs identified by the CPSMT in the 2005 SAFE and stressed the importance of coastwide sardine research and harvest policy review.

## ***Administrative Matters***

### **Legislative Matters**

The Council approved the report of the Legislative Committee, which included a recommendation for language specifically permitting framework actions to be included in legislation on reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council approved the Positions of the Regional Fishery Management Council Chairs on reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

### **Appointments to Advisory Bodies, Standing Committees, and Other Forums**

The Council appointed Dr. Owen Hamel to replace Dr. Han-Lin Lai on the Scientific and Statistical Committee as a representative of NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center.

Recruitment will continue for the vacant Washington Coastal tribal representative on the Salmon Advisory Subpanel and the conservation representative on the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel. Council staff will also begin recruitment for the processor representative on the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel, as Mr. Rod Moore has been appointed to an at-large seat on the Council.

The Council established a new ad hoc coastal pelagic species tribal allocation committee consisting of Mr. Jim Harp, Mr. Mark Helvey/Dr. Steve Freese, Mr. Phil Anderson, Dr. Patty Burke, and Ms. Marija Vojkovich.

At its September meeting, the Council will consider reassigning one of the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center seats on the Highly Migratory Species Management Team with a seat representing the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission.

### **Draft September 2005 Council Meeting Agenda**

The Council adopted the draft agenda for the September 2005 Council meeting to be held September 18-23, 2005 in Portland, Oregon. A draft proposed agenda will be available on the Council website [www.pcouncil.org](http://www.pcouncil.org) during the month of August 2005.

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