



COUNCIL DECISIONS AT THE SEPTEMBER 2007 MEETING

Groundfish Management

Off-Year Science Improvements

The Council approved the following workshops and science activities to improve future stock assessments as the highest priority items for the upcoming year:

1. A stock assessment review workshop to evaluate the 2007 groundfish stock assessment review process;
2. A workshop to evaluate the use of catchability coefficients (q) in groundfish stock assessments; and
3. The initiation of a multi-stage process to better reconstruct uncertain groundfish catch estimates used in assessments via Pacific Coast Fisheries Information Network and Recreational Fishery Information Network forums.

The Council noted several other very useful matters that will also improve scientific capabilities, but requests the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, and the relevant agencies agree on schedules to address these highest priority matters first. The Council also encouraged a process to better coordinate state groundfish catch sampling efforts to focus on species of concern to improve data informing future stock assessments. The Council postponed scheduling a second groundfish harvest policy evaluation workshop until after potential revisions to National Standard 1 guidelines resulting from mandates in the re-authorized Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Stock Assessments for 2009-2010 Groundfish Fisheries

The Council adopted new updated assessments of bocaccio and widow rockfish and new full assessments for black rockfish (northern portion of the stock), chilipepper rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, cowcod, canary rockfish, and arrowtooth flounder for 2009-2010 management decision-making.

Amendment 15: Participation Limitation in the Pacific Whiting Fishery

The Council took final action to adopt Alternative 2A for catcher vessels in the shore-based fishery sector, and Alternative 3 for motherships, catcher-processor vessels, and catcher vessels in the mothership sector. The Council anticipates the effects of this proposed action will be implemented in time for the 2008 fishery and will continue until such time the Council recommends, and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implements, a trawl rationalization program under Amendment 20 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Additionally, the Council approved FMP language that changes the date NMFS sends permit renewal notices from September 1 to September 15.

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The Council adopted the following adjustments to this year's groundfish fishery:

- Prohibit retention of groundfish species with bag limits in the California recreational fishery from Pigeon Point to the California-Oregon border beginning October 1 to reduce yelloweye rockfish impacts.
- Prohibit retention of cabezon in the Oregon recreational boat fishery to avoid exceeding the harvest guideline (this would be a federal regulation conforming to previous state action).
- Maintain the current open access sablefish daily-trip-limit of 350 pounds per day or one weekly landing of 1,050 pounds in the Conception area south of 36° N latitude for the remainder of the year.
- Increase limits for limited entry fixed gear shortspine thornyheads in the Conception area to 3,000 pounds per two months on or as close to October 1 as possible.
- Open the limited entry non-whiting trawl fishery shoreward of 75 fathoms (fm) north of Cape Alava to the U.S.-Canada border and between Humbug Mountain and Cape Arago on October 1 or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Increase limited entry non-whiting trawl cumulative landing limits north of 40°10' N latitude using large footrope trawls seaward of the Rockfish Conservation Area on October 1 or as soon as possible thereafter as follows:
 - sablefish to 22,000 pounds per 2 months,
 - shortspine thornyheads to 12,000 pounds per 2 months,
 - Dover sole to 95,000 pounds per 2 months,
 - Other Flatfish to 150,000 pounds per 2 months,
 - petrale sole to 40,000 pounds per 2 months (period 6 only).

- Increase limited entry non-whiting trawl cumulative landing limits south of 40°10' N latitude on October 1 or as soon as possible thereafter as follows:
 - sablefish to 22,000 pounds per 2 months,
 - longspine thornyheads to 25,000 pounds per 2 months,
 - shortspine thornyheads to 13,000 pounds per 2 months,
 - Dover sole to 95,000 pounds per 2 months,
 - Other Flatfish to 150,000 pounds per 2 months.
- Increase limited entry non-whiting trawl cumulative landing limits south of 38° N latitude on October 1 or as soon as possible thereafter to 55,000 pounds per 2 months of slope rockfish.
- Increase the bycatch limit of widow rockfish for the limited entry whiting trawl fishery to 275 metric tons.
- Re-open the limited entry whiting trawl fishery on October 5 or as soon as possible thereafter seaward of 150 fm (specify the depth restriction in re-issued exempted fishing permits for the shoreside sector and ask for voluntary compliance for the at-sea sectors).

Habitat

Current Habitat Issues

The Council directed the Habitat Committee to prepare two letters on wave energy. The first letter, to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), will address the FERC proposed licensing process for pilot wave energy projects. The second letter will address habitat concerns related to a wave energy project proposed off the Oregon coast near Reedsport. Both letters are scheduled for completion during late October.

Highly Migratory Species Management

High Seas Limited Entry Longline Fishery

The Council directed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team to further develop four options for a high seas shallow-set longline fishery management framework that would include an option for limited entry and an option for joint management framework with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. Adoption of a range of alternatives for analysis was tentatively scheduled for March 2008.

Yellowfin Tuna Overfishing

The Council directed the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and Council staff to develop a draft report to Congress and the State Department, as required by §304(i)(2)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, on recommendations for international actions to end overfishing of yellowfin tuna. The report will describe in more detail the range of conservation measures presented in the HMSMT Report under this agenda item. The report should also explain why the Council is not recommending additional domestic regulations to end overfishing. The Council also requested staff draft a letter to the U.S. delegation to the October 22-24, 2007, Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meeting supporting the range of conservation measures for 2008–2010 that the U.S. delegation tabled at the June 2007 IATTC meeting but were not adopted at that time.

North Pacific Albacore Tuna Stock Assessment

The Council considered the Scientific and Statistical Committee statement assessing the albacore stock assessment and the Highly Migratory Species Management Team and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel statements on relevant issues. However, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission's Northern Committee is the principal forum for developing international conservation recommendations for North Pacific albacore and was meeting at the same time as the Council in Tokyo, Japan. Therefore the Council did not adopt positions for advancement at the 2007 Northern Committee meeting.

Pacific Halibut Management

Proposed Changes to Catch Sharing Plan and 2008 Annual Regulations

The Council adopted for public review two proposed changes to the Area 2A Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan season structures in Washington waters.

North Coast Subarea

For the June fishery: a) revise the opening date to the first Tuesday following June 16; b) specify that the Saturday offshore opener is contingent upon available quota; and c) provide flexibility in the date that the late June fishery reopens.

South Coast Subarea

1. For the primary season: a) in 2008, retain the opening date of May 1. Beginning in 2009, open the fishery on May 1, if it is a Sunday; otherwise, open

on the first Sunday following May 1; and b) specify that the fishery will be open two days per week—Sunday and Monday.

2. For the nearshore fishery: a) revise the set aside to 10 percent or 15 percent of the South Coast quota, which would be used to provide a northern nearshore fishery after the offshore fishery has closed; and b) specify that the nearshore-only fishery would be open on Fridays and Saturdays, even during the primary season.

Pacific Halibut Bycatch Estimate for International Pacific Halibut Commission Adoption

The Council recommended National Marine Fisheries Service forward the report on Pacific halibut bycatch estimates in 2006 Area 2A groundfish trawl fisheries ([Agenda Item H.2.b, Supplemental NMFS Report](#)) to the International Pacific Halibut Commission for use in management of 2008 fisheries. These estimates show a 7 percent decrease in total bycatch mortality but a 10 percent increase in legal size halibut bycatch mortality compared to 2005.

Pacific Halibut Stock Assessment

The Council recommended a letter be sent to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) prior to the November 29 IPHC Interim Meeting detailing the concerns and recommendations presented by the Scientific and Statistical Committee regarding catch apportionment associated with the proposed coast-wide stock assessment model.

Salmon Management

Salmon Methodology Review

The Council directed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to review the following topics and report their findings at the November Council meeting in San Diego:

1. Genetic Stock Identification experimental design, including experimental fishing permit proposal, for West Coast ocean salmon fisheries.
2. Development of the Recovery Exploitation Rates currently used for Lower Columbia River natural tule Chinook.
3. Coho Fishery Regulation Assessment Model (FRAM) base period development and selection of years for base period averaging for input into the Coho FRAM.

In addition, status updates for the following topics were to be presented at the SSC Salmon Subcommittee meeting in October, although no formal review would be conducted.

1. Adding Central Valley, North Washington Coast, and Willapa Bay stocks to the Chinook FRAM.
2. Coded wire tag (CWT) representation for lower Columbia River natural tule Chinook in the Chinook FRAM.
3. CWT representation for lower Columbia River natural coho in the Coho FRAM.

Administrative Matters

Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization Implementation

The Council reviewed *Council Operating Procedure 4* governing the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) as revised by the Council staff in response to new provisions in the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Council tasked staff with incorporating comments by the Council and the SSC into a revised draft for adoption in November.

The Council also reviewed the delayed status of several key issues, including guidelines on implementing annual catch limits, revised environmental review procedures, and revised regulations for exempted fishing permits. Finally, the Council identified priority Council positions on reauthorization implementation to be conveyed at a September 25-26, 2007 workshop on the topic in Washington, D.C.

Legislative Matters

The Council approved recommendations of the Legislative Committee including:

1. Approving a response to U.S. Congressman Young (R-AK) proposed for signature by all eight RFMC chairs regarding H.R. 21, the *Oceans Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act*;
2. Recommending a Council-specific letter to the sponsors of H.R. 21 to emphasize Council efforts to implement ecosystem-based fishery management principles and stress the importance of adequately funding current legislative mandates under the Magnuson-Stevens Act; and
3. Conveying Council recommendations on the *National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007* with an emphasis on requiring states to “opt-in” to offshore aquaculture before federal permits can be issued.

Appointments to Advisory Bodies, Standing Committees, and Other Forums, and Changes to Council Operating Procedures as Needed

The Council made the following appointments to its advisory bodies:

- Mr. John Budrick to one of the two California Department of Fish and Game positions on the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) (replacing Ms. Deborah Aseltine-Neilsen).
- Mr. Corey Niles to the vacant Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) position on the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT).
- Mr. Paul Pierce to the California Sport Fisheries position on the Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) (replacing Mr. Daniel Wolford).
- Dr. Shizhen Wang of the Quinault Department of Fisheries to a vacant at-large position on the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC).
- Dr. Charles Petrosky to the vacant Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) position on the SSC.

The Council noted that the appointment of Dr. Charles Petrosky to the SSC would leave a vacancy in the IDFG position on the Habitat Committee and that IDFG would not be providing a replacement for that position in the foreseeable future.

With regard to appointments to advisory committee positions representing the Council in international organizations governing highly migratory species, the Council chose to wait until the memorandum of understanding between the three West Coast regional councils, Department of Commerce, and Department of State, which establishes the positions, is finalized.

The Council directed staff to (1) correspond with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission concerning their decision to withdraw their representative from the HMSMT and emphasize the need for a technical person to represent them in this position; (2) advertise for candidates to fill the remaining at-large vacancy on the SSC; and (3) determine the status and proper action to follow with regard to the Processor North of Cape Mendocino on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel.

The Council adopted editorial changes to *Council Operating Procedure 19, Protocol for Consideration of Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP) for Groundfish Fisheries*, which make Section C.1 consistent with Section C.5 with regard to the review roles and procedures followed by the GMT and SSC in the groundfish EFP review process.

Council Three-Meeting Outlook, November 2007 Council Meeting Agenda, and Workload Priorities

The proposed agenda for the November 4-9, 2007 Council meeting to be held in San Diego, California will be available on the Council website www.pcouncil.org in October.

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