
**DECISIONS OF THE
PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 14-19, 2011**

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Proposed Ecosystem Based Management Initiative

The Council heard a presentation from Sanctuary Superintendent Paul Michel and Dr. Rikki Dunsmore that provided an overview of the Sanctuary's transition to a new ecosystem based management (EBM) initiative, reported on early findings of a scoping phase, and reviewed collaborative research and management opportunities between the Sanctuary and the Council. The Council tasked the Executive Director with sending a letter to the Sanctuary that 1) expresses support of continued collaboration on the Sanctuary's EBM efforts, 2) accepts the invitation for representation on the Expert Working Group on Objective 4 (Sustainable Uses, including fishing) and offers to take the lead on responsibilities associated with fishing and fisheries in the new EBM initiative, 3) offers Council participation in the Research Activities Panel, 4) emphasizes the importance of involving the State of California on management and research matters, and 5) appends the supplemental reports of the Council's advisory bodies.

HABITAT

Current Habitat Issues

The Council directed the Habitat Committee to draft two letters for consideration at the November Council meeting. The first, to the Department of the Interior/Bureau of Reclamation, relates to a draft environmental impact statement on the Secretarial Determination regarding Klamath Basin dam removal and restoration. The second, to National Marine Fisheries Service, supports the formation of a new stakeholder forum to guide salmon habitat restoration in the Columbia Basin; the Habitat Committee was encouraged to consider existing stakeholder forums in the Columbia River basin when drafting the letter.

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Swordfish Management Workshop Report

The Council directed the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Team and Advisory Subpanel to provide information to inform a decision on whether to change the current west coast swordfish fishery, tentatively scheduled for the March 2012 Council meeting. This information would include:

1. All relevant new information on bycatch and bycatch mitigation in swordfish fisheries, including the amount and reasons for changes in bycatch in the Hawaii based longline fishery since 2000, and information about new gears, such as the buoy-based gear used in Florida area fisheries;
2. Current research on the distribution of sea turtles and their critical habitat off the west coast and its relevance to potential fishery management changes, including a change to the configuration of the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area (PLCA); and
3. Based on the information in 1 and 2 above, comparisons of protected species bycatch estimates between current, status quo west coast swordfish fisheries, the gear types described above, fisheries in place at the time of HMS FMP adoption and possible future fishery designs.

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

Stock Assessments for 2013-2014 Groundfish Fisheries

The Council adopted new assessments for Pacific ocean perch, petrale sole, spiny dogfish, sablefish, Dover sole, greenspotted rockfish, and blackgill rockfish for management decision-making as recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). A new widow rockfish assessment was scheduled for further review by the SSC Groundfish Subcommittee at the September “mop-up” panel. The Council will consider adopting the assessments to be reviewed at the “mop-up” panel in November.

Biennial Management Process for 2013-2014 Groundfish Fisheries

The Council adopted the 2013-14 overfishing limits (OFLs) as provided in Agenda Item G.5.a, Supplemental Revised Attachment 2 and the Commercial Landings Distribution Model, as recommended by the SSC. The Council also adopted preliminary acceptable biological catches (ABCs) as provided in Agenda Item G.5.a, Supplemental Revised Attachment 4, except for sablefish and spiny dogfish. For sablefish, the Council adopted a greater level of scientific uncertainty (P^* of 0.33), which determines preliminary coastwide ABCs of 5,654 mt and 6,113 mt for 2013 and 2014, respectively. The Council also adopted a greater level of scientific uncertainty for spiny dogfish (P^* value of .3), resulting in preliminary 2013 and 2014 ABCs of 0.3, which are 2,044 mt and 2,024 mt respectively. The Council also deferred a decision to restructure the current stock complexes until the 2015-16 specifications cycle pending further analysis and discussion regarding the impacts associated with this change.

Trawl Rationalization Trailing Actions

Under this agenda item, the Council took the following action on four trailing actions that have been matters of ongoing consideration.

1. Any additional consideration of creating a special exception to the quota share (QS) control limits (safe harbor) for community fishing associations was set aside until at least the five year program review scheduled to start in 2015. Community fishing associations can continue to form and acquire QS so long as they do not exceed the control limits.
2. Final action was taken approving a QS safe harbor for risk pools, adopting the preliminary preferred alternative as modified by the specific recommendations contained in Supplemental GAP Report G.6.b.
3. Basic Cost Recovery Program structure elements were adopted to begin January 1, 2013 consistent with the recommendations contained in Agenda Item G.6.b, the CRC Report, with further refinement of the actual amounts to be recovered from the fishery sectors to occur at a future Council meeting.
4. Further analysis and consideration of a QS safe harbor and other issues of concern for lenders was scheduled for the November 2011 Council meeting.

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The Council recommended increasing open access fixed gear sablefish trip limits south of 36° N. latitude and increasing limited entry and open access fixed gear trip limits for shallow nearshore rockfish south of 40°10 N. latitude, starting November 1 through the rest of the year. For more information see the Council blog at <http://www.pcouncil.org/2011/09/16608/gf-inseason-sept2011/>.

Emerging Issues under Trawl Rationalization and Intersector Allocation

The Council voted unanimously to affirm that the individual fishing quota program provision for carrying over up to 10 percent of uncaught quota pounds (QP) from 2011 to 2012, as described in current regulations should be fully implemented for 2012 and that such implementation not require a reduction in the trawl allocation for 2012. Release and distribution of any 2011 carryover QP may occur as late as midyear, after full accounting of 2011 QP use is accomplished. The Council also voted to pursue a number of trailing actions selected as priority items from a large list of candidate items, with variable implementation target dates ranging from 2013 to 2015. More detail will be provided on these issues in the newsletter and postings to the Council web page. The Council tasked its Trawl Rationalization Regulatory Evaluation Committee (TRREC) with holding a one day meeting in October to address two priorities for potential implementation in 2013: the first priority is to review regulations and develop recommendations regarding (a) making it permissible for stacking both a limited entry trawl and fixed gear permit on a single vessel at the same time, (b) changing the season opening date for whiting, (c) allowing vessels to carry multiple gears at the same time, and (d) modifying several identified trawl gear regulations that impair increased efficiency and selectivity. As a secondary priority, the TRREC may focus on other regulations made obsolete by implementation of the new trawl rationalization program in 2011.

Biennial Management Process for 2013-2014 Groundfish Fisheries – Part 2

The Council repeated their intent to reduce the scope and number of changes to status quo harvest specifications and management measures for 2013-2014.

The Council adopted only a few new management measures for preliminary analysis and scoping, which will be provided at the November Council meeting.

Science Improvements for the next Groundfish Management Cycle

The Council prioritized the six workshops recommended by the SSC to improve the science informing future groundfish management, as described in the Agenda Item G.10.c SSC statement. Council staff will work with the Northwest and Southwest Fishery Science Centers regarding funding and logistics of these workshops over the next year, with the B₀-based management and its associated decision rules identified as the workshop to be Council-sponsored. The Council placed the review of historical catch reconstructions as the lowest priority. The remaining workshops include: 1) a “post-mortem” review of the 2011 assessment process, 2) a data-poor assessment methods review, 3) a workshop to evaluate an acoustic remotely operated vehicle survey technique for surveying the Cowcod Conservation Areas, and 4) a workshop on how to assess transboundary stocks. The Council further tasked the GMT with continuing to improve models and analyses that would inform the 2015-16 specifications decision-making process.

SALMON MANAGEMENT

PROGRESS REPORTS ON COLUMBIA RIVER TULE AND SACRAMENTO WINTER RUN CHINOOK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The Council recommended continued development and assessment of alternatives for an abundance based management framework for lower Columbia River tule fall Chinook, including an alternative as recommended by the Salmon Advisory Subpanel as follows:

Lower River Hatchery Abundance Forecast	Exploitation Rate Limit
0-30,000	0.30
30,000-40,000	0.35
40,000-80,000	0.38
>80,000	0.40

The Council recommended continued development of a harvest impact model for Sacramento winter run Chinook for use in developing a new ESA consultation framework.

2011 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 Costa Mesa.

- Examination of the potential bias in Coho and Chinook Fishery Regulation Assessment Model of fishery-related mortality introduced by mark-selective fisheries;
- A multi-year review and evaluation of preseason and postseason mark-selective fisheries both north and south of Cape Falcon -Salmon Technical Team;
- Abundance-based management framework for Lower Columbia River tulle fall Chinook;
- Cohort reconstruction and harvest impact model for Sacramento winter run Chinook.

PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

2011 Pacific Halibut Fishery Regulations

The Council adopted for public review, proposed changes to the Area 2A Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and 2012 regulations as described in Agenda Item 1.1.b, WDFW Report, and Agenda Item 1.1.b, ODFW Report for the area north of Humbug Mountain, except as modified to add an option for the Columbia River sub-area allocation to receive an amount from the Oregon/California allocation that is equal to the amount received from the Washington allocation.

For the area South of Humbug Mountain, three subarea alternatives were adopted for public review.

1. Status quo (no action)—opens May 1, seven days per week until October 31
2. Opens May 1 through the earlier of October 31 or projected attainment of the subarea catch limit.
3. Fixed seasons established preseason based on expected catch per day, starting no earlier than May 1 and ending no later than October 31.

Estimated Pacific Halibut Bycatch for the 2012 Groundfish Fisheries

The Council recommended National Marine Fisheries Service forward to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) the Northwest Fishery Science Center report on Pacific halibut bycatch estimates in 2010 Area 2A groundfish trawl and fixed gear fisheries for use in conducting the Pacific halibut stock assessment, with no changes.

After discussion affirming the ten percent carry-over provision of Pacific halibut individual bycatch quota in groundfish trawl fisheries, the Council recommended IPHC use 130,000 pounds as the estimated bycatch mortality of Pacific halibut in Area 2A groundfish trawl fisheries when determining Area 2A total allowable catch in 2012.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Legislative Matters

The Council directed the Executive Director to send an initial response to Congresswoman Napolitano expressing general comments and concerns regarding potential adverse effects of H.R. 1837 (San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act) on Central Valley salmon populations and the fishery communities that depend on them. The letter will also advise Congresswoman Napolitano that the Council intends further process on her request for analysis of the potential impacts of this proposed legislation, and that it will take a significant amount of time to complete a detailed analysis. Council staff was directed to prepare a more detailed draft report on H.R. 1837 for review by the Legislative Committee and Council advisory bodies at a future Council meeting.

Fiscal Matters

The Council approved the Budget Committee Report and adopted its recommendation to increase the CY 2011 operational budget by \$40,000 for trawl rationalization trailing actions and \$10,000 for planning activities for the 2012 national fishery conference.

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

In considering advisory body and committee appointments, the Council: 1) appointed Mr. Shems Jud to the vacant conservation position on the Groundfish Allocation Committee; 2) directed staff to reissue the call for nominations to the vacant Washington at large position on the Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel to allow for further consideration at the November Council meeting; 3) confirmed the appointment of LCDR Elisa Garrity to the U.S. Coast Guard 11th District position on the Enforcement Consultants; 4) appointed Mr. David Crabbe to fill a vacancy on the Legislative Committee; 5) chose not to reactivate the ad hoc Coastal Pelagic Species Tribal Allocation Committee to deal with the recent proposal by the Quinault tribe to begin harvesting sardine in 2012; and 6) directed the Council Chair to consider and appoint any needed additional members to the Trawl Rationalization Regulatory Evaluation Committee for their October meeting.

Future Council Meeting Agenda Workload Planning

The proposed agenda for the November 2011 Council meeting in Costa Mesa, California will be available on www.pcouncil.org in October 2011.

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