

Decision Summary Document
Pacific Fishery Management Council

March 8-14, 2018

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Meeting Decision Summary Documents are highlights of significant decisions made at Council meetings. Results of agenda items that do not reach a level of highlight significance are typically not described in the Decision Summary Document. For a more detailed account of Council meeting discussions, see the [Council meeting record and voting logs](#) or the [Council newsletter](#).

Habitat

Current Habitat Issues

The Council approved and submitted a comment letter to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke, voicing the Council's opposition to offshore oil and gas leasing off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California and asking to be excluded from further consideration of Outer Continental Shelf lease development.

Salmon Management

Review of 2017 Fisheries and Summary of 2018 Stock Forecasts

The Council adopted the stock abundances, acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and overfishing limits (OFLs) as presented in the 2018 Preseason Report I, as the best available science for use in 2018 salmon management, as recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC).

The Council will recommend National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS) consider changes to stock status designation for two Chinook stocks (Sacramento Fall Chinook and Klamath River Fall Chinook), and three coho stocks (Queets River natural coho, Strait of Juan de Fuca natural coho, and Snohomish natural coho). These five stocks meet the criteria for 'overfished' status described in the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP), as detailed in the 2018 Preseason Report I. The notification of these status changes will also be conveyed to the NMFS Northwest Regional Administrator and other pertinent management agencies consistent with the language in Chapter 3 of the FMP.

Adoption of 2018 Management Alternatives for Public Review

The Council adopted three [Alternative sets of management measures](#) for the 2018 ocean commercial, recreational, and tribal salmon fisheries. Public hearings on the Alternatives have

been scheduled in Westport, Washington and Coos Bay, Oregon for Monday, March 26 and Salinas, California for Tuesday, March 27. The Council is scheduled to adopt final 2018 ocean salmon regulations at its [April 6-11 meeting in Portland, Oregon](#).

Inseason action was taken to rescind commercial fisheries south of Cape Falcon previously scheduled to begin in March and April. Recreational fisheries were also rescinded in the Fort Bragg and San Francisco management areas that had been scheduled to begin April 7.

Ecosystem

California Current Ecosystem and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Report and Science Review Topics

The Council received an update on the [2018 Annual State of the California Current Ecosystem Report](#). The Council also endorsed the [SSC's recommendations](#) for [ecosystem science topic](#) review in 2018.

Fishery Ecosystem Plan Climate and Communities Initiative Update

The Council provided guidance on revisions to the goal statement for this initiative to emphasize the possibility of Council action related to initiative objectives. The Council encouraged its advisory bodies to engage with the organizers of the upcoming May 15-16, 2018 workshop to gather stakeholder input on this initiative. Such engagement will help with planning the format and contents of the workshop. The Council also discussed possible ways to focus initiative activities, such as emphasizing fisheries managed under Council FMPs.

Sablefish Ecosystem Indicators: Management Strategy Evaluation

The Council recommended further development of a [draft Management Strategy Evaluation](#) (MSE) for sablefish and committed to scheduling an initial session at a future Council meeting to begin stakeholder engagement. The MSE approach should provide insight into environmental drivers that can inform future sablefish stock assessments and management strategies to sustain the stock and dependent sablefish fisheries throughout its range. The process will explore stock dynamics, environmental drivers of sablefish productivity, and fishery management strategies throughout the stock's range in the NE Pacific.

Pacific Halibut

Annual International Pacific Halibut Commission Meeting Report

Dr. Dave Wilson, the Executive Director of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), [reported](#) the IPHC was unable to set a total allowable catch for 2018. As a result, the Area 2A catch limit; will be set by NMFS on or before March 24, 2018.

Incidental Catch Recommendations: Options for the Salmon Troll and Final Recommendations for Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries

Options for the Salmon Troll:

The Council adopted the following alternatives for public review:

Option 1: May 1, 2018 through the end of the 2018 salmon troll fishery, and April 1-30, 2019, license holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per three Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 20 halibut landed per trip.

Option 2: May 1, 2018 through the end of the 2018 salmon troll fishery, and April 1-30, 2019, license holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per three Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 30 halibut landed per trip.

Option 3: May 1, 2018 through the end of the 2018 salmon troll fishery, and April 1-30, 2019, license holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per two Chinook, except two Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut landed per trip.

Final Council action on halibut retention in the salmon troll fishery is scheduled for the April 2018 Council meeting.

Final Recommendations for Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries: The Council recommended the 2018 incidental halibut catch restrictions in the fixed gear fishery north of Point Chehalis from April 1 through October 31, be set at 160 pounds of dressed weight halibut for every 1,000 pounds dressed weight of sablefish, plus 2 additional halibut in excess of the ratio.

Groundfish

Trawl Catch Shares - Gear Switching and Trawl Sablefish Area Management

At its April 2018 Council meeting, the Council is scheduled to set a calendar for the process of developing alternatives for gear switching and trawl sablefish area management issues. That process will include forming and scheduling meetings of a new ad hoc committee composed of six Council members (one representative from each of the coastal states, NMFS, one at large Council member, and the Council chair) and six members of the public that will act as advisors. The ad-hoc committee will focus on identifying obstacles to achieving the goals and objectives of the catch share plan, with particular focus on issues related to gear switching and unharvested sablefish quota pounds (QPs) south of 36 degrees. As appropriate to overcome identified obstacles, the committee will discuss and develop options, including but not limited to, actions that may modify rules for gear switching by trawl permit holders and QP leasing to vessels using fixed gear, as well as options that may encourage increased utilization of sablefish QPs south of 36 degrees.

Implementation of the 2018 Pacific Whiting Fishery Under the U.S./Canada Agreement

Mr. Frank Lockhart, Chair of the Joint Management Committee (JMC), the decision-making body in the international Pacific whiting process, and Mr. Phil Anderson, Council representative to the JMC, reported on this year's Pacific whiting decision. The 2018 Pacific whiting assessment indicated the stock is healthy at 66.7 percent of its unfished spawning biomass, which was slightly lower than estimated last year. The stock has remained at a relatively high abundance since 2013 due to the strength of large 2010 and 2014 cohorts.

The 2018 coastwide total allowable catch (TAC) of 597,500 mt is the same as in 2017, resulting in an allocation of 441,433 mt for U.S. fisheries.

Initial Stock Assessment Plan and Terms of Reference

The Council adopted for public review the following priorities for groundfish stock assessments to be conducted in the 2019 and 2021 assessment cycles.

2019 Full Assessments: Sablefish, Cowcod, Cabezon (Oregon and California), Longnose skate, Big skate, Gopher rockfish (may be gopher and black-and yellow rockfish as a complex), and Dover sole.

2019 Update Assessments: Petrale sole, Widow rockfish.

2021 Full Assessments: Vermilion rockfish (may be vermilion and sunset rockfish as a complex south of Pt. Conception and as a separate area model north of Pt. Conception), Brown rockfish, Copper rockfish, Quillback rockfish, Bank rockfish, Black rockfish, and Pacific cod.

The Council also adopted the [Scientific and Statistical Committee's recommendations](#) for changes to three terms of reference (those defining the processes for conducting and reviewing stock assessments, rebuilding analyses, and new proposed methodologies) and directed Council staff to coordinate proposed changes to those documents. The Council will take final action on 2019 stock assessment priorities, the three terms of reference, adopt a schedule of 2019 stock assessment review panels, and refine their 2021 stock assessment priorities at their June 2018 meeting in Spokane, Washington.

Endangered Species Act Biological Opinion on the Take of Listed Salmon in Groundfish Fisheries

After hearing a presentation from NMFS on the contents of the Incidental Take Statement, the Council expressed concern with the requirement to recommend regulations to close the fishery if guideline amounts for salmon bycatch, plus a reserve amount, were exceeded in a calendar year.

The Council refined a range of alternatives (ROA) proposed by the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to address elements in the Reasonable and Prudent Measures that must be implemented as part of the 2019-2020 biennial harvest specifications and management measures process. In particular, the Council addressed fishery specific guideline amounts for the whiting trawl fishery, the shoreside individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery, and other non-trawl fisheries with the intent to "hold harmless" non-trawl fisheries that generally take small amounts of salmon.

The GMT will refine this ROA, which is scheduled for adoption at the April Council meeting.

Trawl Catch Shares – Final Range of Alternatives for Follow-On Actions

The Council moved forward for analysis the [alternatives and purpose and need statements](#), with one exception, and the specification of one additional alternative. With respect to "Shorebased IFQ Sector Harvest Complex Needs," the Council removed Alternative 1, Suboption B, which would have allowed NMFS to sell surplus QP to those with deficits after then end of the fishing year. With respect to "Shorebased IFQ Accumulation Limits," the Council specified an action alternative for only one species, blackgill rockfish. The range for analysis for the blackgill rockfish annual vessel QP limit will include the currently recommended limit (9 percent) up to a maximum of 30 percent.

Update on 2019-2020 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures

The Council received an [update](#) on the analyses informing 2019-2020 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures. The Council adopted revised 2019 and 2020 [harvest specifications](#) for lingcod under the No Action alternative (i.e., default harvest control rules [HCRs]) and Alternative 1 (preliminary preferred HCRs) and revised 2020 bocaccio harvest specifications as recommended by the [Scientific and Statistical Committee](#). The Council also confirmed their intent to adopt the default P* (overfishing probability) of 0.40 for yelloweye rockfish used to specify 2019 and 2020 acceptable biological catches. The Council is scheduled to adopt final preferred 2019 and 2020 annual catch limits and preliminary preferred 2019 and 2020 management measures at their April meeting in Portland, Oregon.

Final Inseason Management, Including Shorebased Carryover and Exempted Fishing Permits

For the Washington recreational fishery, the Council recommended an increase in the canary rockfish sub-limit from one to two fish in all marine areas and added a separate flatfish limit of three fish per day that would not be subject to the daily aggregate bag limit of nine. The Council also recommended an increase in the canary rockfish sub-limit from one to two fish for the California recreational fishery.

The Council recommended that NMFS issue surplus carryover pounds from 2017 to 2018 for all non-whiting individual fishing quota species where the annual catch limit (ACL) is less than the acceptable biological catch (ABC). Since the ABC and overfishing limit for sablefish, which are specified coastwide, were not exceeded, the Council also recommended that NMFS issue carryover for sablefish north of 36° N. latitude to eligible vessel accounts despite exceeding the sablefish north ACL in 2017.

The Council did not extend the 2018 Trawl Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) selective flatfish trawl exemption south of 42° N. latitude. In addition, the Council recommended that the salmon recently caught with bottom trawl gear south of 42° N. latitude on a declared EFP trip not be included in the 80-fish EFP limit for that area since the catch of salmon was not made with EFP related gear on that trip, and EFP gear was not deployed on that trip. An EFP is not required to use bottom trawl gear in this area, but is required for a vessel to carry both gears at the same time during the trip. Since the 80-fish limit has not been exceeded, all EFP participants may continue to operate in this area under the 2018 Trawl EFP. The Council also recommended that NMFS reopen the 2018 Trawl EFP enrollment process to new applicants.

Finally, the Council received a [request from the Salmon Advisory Subpanel](#) to change the lingcod-to-salmon retention ratio in the open access fishery north of 40°10' N. latitude from

one lingcod per 15 salmon to one lingcod per five salmon. The Council directed the GMT to examine which public process the Council should use to consider changing the ratio. Two options are through an inseason action or through the 2019-2020 harvest specification process.

Highly Migratory Species

Deep-Set Buoy Gear Authorization – Final Range of Alternatives/Preliminary Preferred Alternative

The Council adopted a range of alternatives to authorize a deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) fishery based on the [preliminary range adopted in September 2017](#) and provided guidance to the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) on analyses to support a decision on the number of limited entry permits that may be issued. In September 2018 the Council will consider potential qualifying criteria for a limited entry permit. In March 2019 the Council is scheduled to select its final preferred alternatives including qualifying criteria for a limited entry permit.

Proposed Deep-Set Buoy Gear Exempted Fishing Permits

The Council made a recommendation to NMFS on issuance of the 13 DSBG EFP applications submitted for review at this meeting based on [input from its HMSMT](#).

The Council also decided to suspend the current practice of accepting DSBG EFP applications at every meeting at which HMS items are on the agenda. Those applications for which the Council requested revision and resubmission will be reviewed again at the June 2018 Council meeting, when a final recommendation will be made. The Council will next consider new DSBG EFP applications in June 2019, following the process outlined in [Council Operating Procedure 20](#).

Administrative Matters

National Marine Sanctuaries Coordination Report

Representatives of the West Coast Regional Office of the National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) Program provided a [report](#) to the Council on current and upcoming activities. These include the sanctuary nomination process, management plan reviews, seafloor mapping, and efforts aimed at reducing whale entanglements and ship strikes, among others. The Council expressed appreciation and encouraged the NMS representatives to return in 2019.

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

The Council reviewed and approved the following appointments:

- Mr. Carl Nish was appointed to the Processor North of Cape Mendocino seat on the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) formerly held by Mr. Pierre Marchand.
- Mr. Darus Peake was appointed to the Oregon Troll seat on the Salmon Advisory Subpanel formerly held by Mr. Paul Heikkila.
- Ms. Ashton Harp was appointed to the vacant Tribal seat on Salmon Technical Team.
- Mr. James Carretta was appointed to fill the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center seat on the HMSMT formerly held by Dr. Tim Sippel.

NMFS also announced an update to its list of designees for the West Coast Regional Administrators Council seat held by Mr. Barry Thom:

- Mr. Ryan Wulff, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries
- Ms. Aja Szumylo, Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Branch Chief
- Ms. Kelly Ames, Sustainable Fisheries Division Operations and Policy Branch Chief
- Mr. Frank Lockhart, Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species Senior Policy Analyst
- Ms. Heidi Taylor, Highly Migratory Species Branch Chief
- Dr. Peter Dygert, Anadromous Harvest Management Branch Chief

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