

## PACIFIC WHITING HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2011

The Pacific whiting fishery management process is unlike that for other Federally-managed west coast groundfish for 2011 fisheries. While harvest specifications and management measures for most groundfish are decided in the biennial specifications process, whiting are assessed annually and harvest specifications for fisheries targeting Pacific whiting are decided at each March Council meeting using results from stock assessments that are prepared and reviewed immediately prior to the Council decision.

This year the assessment review panel met during the week of the briefing book deadline. Consequently, the executive summary of the stock assessment, prepared in a collaborative effort by U.S. and Canadian scientists, and review panel report will be provided as Supplemental Attachments 1 and 2, respectively (*a CD of the full assessment document will also be provided*). The Stock Assessment and Review Panel report, along with other materials, will be reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) at this meeting.

Beginning in 2004, the transboundary stock of Pacific whiting has been managed jointly with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, in the spirit of a new process described in a treaty that has been signed and ratified. The primary tenets of the treaty include a joint U.S.-Canada annual assessment and management process, a research commitment, and a harvest sharing agreement providing 73.88 percent of the coastwide optimum yield (OY) for U.S. fisheries and 26.12 percent for Canadian fisheries. The U.S. regulations implementing the treaty have finally been adopted; therefore, Pacific whiting harvest specifications should be decided by the new international whiting commission starting next year.

The Council is tasked with setting an acceptable biological catch (ABC) and OY for Pacific whiting that will be used to manage 2011 fisheries. Management measures to properly prosecute the U.S. fishery will be decided at this meeting under the Inseason Adjustments Agenda Items H.4 (and H.6, if needed) when bycatch balance with other fisheries is considered. Unless there is a change in the research, non-whiting fishery bycatch, and tribal set-asides, once the OY is set, the apportionment within the non-tribal fisheries is set automatically via the existing intersector allocation (i.e., 42 percent for the shoreside whiting sector, 24 percent for the at-sea mothership whiting sector, and 34 percent for the at-sea catcher-processor whiting sector).

Considerations for deciding 2011 Pacific whiting harvest specifications include the stock's current and projected status, the relative uncertainty of the current biomass estimate, and the international agreement with Canada. Further, impact analysis of a range of 2011 OYs has been provided in the 2011-2012 biennial specifications Draft Environmental Impact Statement to frontload the NEPA analyses needed to implement 2011 whiting fishery regulations soon after the March Council meeting. The upper range of 2011 OYs analyzed was 150 percent of the coastwide (U.S. plus Canada) 2010 OY of 262,500 mt. Therefore, the highest 2011 coastwide whiting OY that can be considered is 393,750 mt. The Council should make these considerations and consider the advice of the assessment review panel, the SSC, and other advisors before adopting an assessment for use in management decision-making. The

assessment, once approved, will be used to set 2011 Pacific whiting harvest specifications. Any management measures for 2011 Pacific whiting fisheries will be decided under the inseason management agenda items H.4 and H.6.

**Council Action:**

- 1. Adopt a 2011 Pacific whiting stock assessment.**
- 2. Adopt a 2011 ABC and OY for Pacific whiting.**
- 3. Adopt a Pacific whiting set-aside to accommodate 2011 tribal whiting fisheries.**

**Reference Materials:**

1. Agenda Item H.3.a, Supplemental Attachment 1: Executive Summary of Assessment and Management Advice for Pacific hake in U.S. and Canadian waters in 2011.
2. Agenda Item H.3.a, Supplemental Attachment 2: Pacific Whiting – The Joint U.S.-Canada STAR Panel Report.

**Agenda Order:**

- a. Agenda Item Overview **John DeVore**
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Final 2011 Stock Assessment, Allowable Biological Catch, and Optimum Yield (Management Measures will be adopted under Inseason Adjustments, Agenda Item H.4 and Agenda Item H.6 (if Necessary)).

PFMC  
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