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REPORT FROM THE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING June 18 - 25, 2014

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Update on Regulatory Matters and International Activities

Temporary Rule to Reduce Risk of Sperm Whale Bycatch in the West Coast Swordfish Drift Gillnet (DGN) Fishery:

On September 4, 2013, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a temporary rule for emergency action to modify the DGN fishery for the 2013-2014 fishing season under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). The purpose of the action was to reduce risk associated with sperm whale bycatch in the DGN fishery for the 2013-2014 fishing season based on recommendations from the Pacific Offshore Cetacean Take Reduction Team (TRT). The temporary rule expired on January 31, 2014, which corresponded with the traditional end of the DGN fishing season. Following discussion of the conservation measures and timelines in the rule at its March 2013 meeting, the Council sent a letter to NMFS requesting renewal of the temporary rule so that sperm whale conservation measures continue to be in place while permanent rulemaking is developed. On May 22, 2014, NMFS published a second temporary rule renewing the conservation measures implemented under the original temporary rule. The new rule will expire on August 5, 2014.

Status of Permanent Rulemaking: Based in part on the TRT recommendations and recently updated best available science on sperm whale population abundance estimates and DGN fishery annual bycatch estimates, NMFS has initiated proposed-to-final rulemaking under MSA authority. This rulemaking would mandate the use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS) on all active thresher shark/swordfish large-mesh DGN vessels and implement a 48-hour pre-trip notification requirement to facilitate observer placement on the vessels, if so requested. The target date for completing the MSA rulemaking is late-summer 2014 to coincide with the traditional start of the DGN fishing season

2014 Pacific Bluefin Tuna Stock Assessment Results:

The current status of Pacific bluefin tuna was recently updated and it is estimated that the 2012 biomass is near historically low levels, and, experiencing high exploitation rates above nearly all candidate biological limit reference points. These results are similar to the previous 2012 assessment, which also indicated that the stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing.

The Council made the following recommendations for Pacific bluefin tuna; NMFS will present these recommendations at the upcoming Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meeting.

- Support the NMFS proposal to limit the IATTC-wide commercial Pacific bluefin tuna catch to 3,000 metric tons (mt) in 2015, and, to 2,500 mt in 2016.
- Support access by the United States fleet to the Pacific bluefin tuna stock in order to maintain an economically viable commercial fishery.
- Reduce recreational Pacific Bluefin tuna fishing mortality domestically through the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) process (e.g. a reduction in bag limits).

Drift Gillnet Fishery Transition Issues

The Council's management direction for West Coast Swordfish under MSA authority will include the following elements for 2014 and beyond:

- With the goal of reducing bycatch in the Drift Gillnet (DGN) fishery, direct the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) to provide the Council with a range of alternatives for use in establishing hard caps on take of high-priority protected species under MSA authority. If hard caps are reached or exceeded during a fishing season, the fishery would be closed for the remainder of the season. The alternatives for hard caps will include the following species: Fin, Humpback, and Sperm whales, and Leatherback, Loggerhead, Olive Ridley, and Green turtles; Council further directs HMSMT to develop a range of bycatch reduction alternatives for other discard species. The team should use current Biological Opinions, Potential Biological Removals, and Incidental Take Statements as well as other bycatch reduction estimation tools in developing this range of alternatives.
- Establish a control date of June 23, 2014, for purposes of possibly considering a future Federal DGN Limited Entry Program under MSA authority.
- The Council shall stress to NMFS West Coast Region and Headquarters that increasing observer coverage rates above 2013 levels for this fishery is a high priority for the West Coast moving forward. Given that take of Endangered Species are rare events, implementation of hard caps on this fishery makes precise take estimates critical, both for ensuring protection of these species, and for fishery participants who make business decisions on participating in the fishery each season. The Council's intent is that a requirement be established for 100% accountability via observers and/or Electronic Monitoring (EM) no later than late summer 2016.
- Support for continued science, discussions and building of collaborations between our fishery communities, agencies, scientists and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for alternative gear research with the intent to develop new fisheries, research to further minimize bycatch in the DGN fishery, maintain a viable domestic West Coast Highly Migratory Species (HMS) fishery, and capacity reduction in the DGN fishery through buyouts or other incentives.

- Ask NMFS to report on potential regulatory amendments that would remove exemptions for un-observable vessels in the DGN fishery.
- Review of the fishery's performance routinely, to evaluate the fishery's ability to operate within hard cap levels and successfully minimize bycatch of other discard species according to bycatch performance standards adopted by the Council.
- Evaluate future access to the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area (PLCA) in light of full accountability and acceptable bycatch cap levels.

Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Process

The Council will solicit EFP proposals to test alternative gear types or new approaches for using pelagic drift gillnet gear through a widely circulated notice. The due date for EFP proposals will be August 15. The Council will initially review proposals at the September 2014 meeting and make final recommendations to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on issuance of EFPs at the November 2014 meeting.

The Council adopted evaluation criteria for solicited EFP proposals based on recommendations from the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT). In addition, EFP proposals should be compatible with the policy directives identified by the Council under Agenda Item E.2, Drift Gillnet Fishery Transition Issues, with particular reference to the objectives of maintaining commercially viable HMS target fisheries and minimizing bycatch. Details of these evaluation criteria will be included in the public notice.

All EFP activities should be designed for 100 percent monitoring and applicants are asked to express their willingness to test electronic monitoring systems and their willingness and ability to pay the costs associated with observer coverage

Initial Scoping of Biennial Specifications and Management Measures

The Council adopted a list of alternatives for the 2015/16 and 2016/17 biennial cycle that includes the following items for analysis:

1. Bluefin Tuna
 - a. Evaluate alternatives (including bag limit changes) to reduce the recreational fishery bluefin tuna mortality rate.
2. VMS Ping Rate
 - a. Evaluate alternatives for the DGN fishery only.
3. Shallow Set/Deep Set Longline Fishery
 - a. Evaluate alternatives designed to achieve opportunity equity with Hawaii Long Line permit holders outside the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ or 200 mile limit).
 - b. Evaluate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendment alternatives for a fishery inside the EEZ.
4. DGN Hard Caps/Bycatch Reduction Targets

- a. Evaluate alternatives as per the policy direction covered under DGN transition issues.
5. DGN Permit Transition to MSA Authority
 - a. Evaluate FMP Amendment alternatives to transition California Limited Entry permits to MSA authority.
6. DGN Observer Requirements
 - a. Evaluate a 100% observer requirement.

In addition, the Council recommended that NMFS publish a final rule to implement the use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS) on all active thresher shark/swordfish large-mesh DGN vessels, and implement a 48-hour pre-trip notification requirement to facilitate observer placement on the vessels, by late summer 2014.

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

Electronic Monitoring Regulatory Process

The Council spent an entire day on this agenda item and refined and adopted a list of preliminary preferred alternatives for public review. Specific to the bottomtrawl non-whiting fishery the list includes an option that vessels could use cameras in lieu of observers if they are a member of a co-op.

The Council is currently scheduled for final decision making on a regulatory program recommendation to the NMFS at the September, 2014 Council meeting. At that time, the Council may make final decisions on individual fishery sectors, as opposed to needing to make a final decision for all sectors simultaneously.

Omnibus Regulation Changes

Under this agenda item, the Council:

- Made a final recommendation on continuation of the trawl rationalization adaptive management program (AMP) pass-through, and,
- Addressed any other issues identified by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with respect to development of rules to implement the Council's past recommendations on trawl trailing actions, and,
- Began to develop a list of potential new groundfish management measures to be considered outside the biennial process, including trawl rationalization trailing actions and limited entry fixed gear-related actions.

Trawl Rationalization Adaptive Management Program; Continuation of the AMP Pass-Thru

Under Amendment 20 (Trawl Rationalization) to the groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), 10% of the annual distributions of the quota pounds (QP) issued for nonwhiting quota

shares (QS) and halibut individual bycatch quota (IBQ) are reserved for the AMP. Currently the QP issued for the AMP QS/IBQ are distributed annually to QS/IBQ holders, in proportion to their QS/IBQ holdings, i.e. “passed through” based on QS/IBQ percentages. This “pass-through” has been in place as a temporary measure because the Council has yet to develop alternative criteria for their distribution (criteria that would address the objectives for the AMP program). The “pass-through” regulations are scheduled to sunset prior to the distribution for the 2015 fishing year.

The Council adopted the following AMP Final Preferred Alternative that NMFS will implement prior to the 2015 fishing year:

- The AMP QP allocation procedures will be considered as part of the five-year trawl rationalization program review, and the pass-through procedure used since 2011 will be continued until the implementation of regulations resulting from the five-year review.

New Groundfish Management Measures (Omnibus)

In March 2013, the Council adopted a process whereby only adjustments to routine management measures would be considered during the process to establish biennial harvest specifications and management measures. New management measures would be considered outside of the biennial process, and specifically, a call for new management measure proposals would be conducted at the June Council meeting in even-numbered years (e.g., 2014). At that June meeting, the Council would adopt a draft calendar and a prioritized list of new management measures to be analyzed outside of the harvest specifications and management measures process. The recommendation for narrowing the types of management measures considered during the biennial process, along with the development of default harvest control rules under Amendment 24 and the long-term impact analysis, was intended to reduce workload during the biennial process and increase the probability that harvest specifications would be implemented by January 1. Also, at the March 2014 meeting, the Council aggregated consideration and prioritization of trawl trailing actions, delayed from last September to this June’s Council meeting, to allow for a more holistic evaluation of groundfish priorities and workload.

Coming into this meeting, the prioritization list included fifty nine items, the Council added additional items but time constraints prevented a full prioritization. Notable additions:

- ❖ Blackgill Rockfish Re-allocation
 - Amendment 21 was approved in 2010 and establishes long-term allocations between the Trawl and Non-Trawl sectors of the groundfish fishery.
 - Under status quo, blackgill rockfish are managed as part of the slope rockfish complex, meaning that in establishing harvest guidelines (HG) or Annual Catch Limits (ACLs), the Amendment-21 allocation for slope rockfish (63% trawl: 37% non-trawl) is

applied. This allocation was based on the years 2003-2005 and included all slope rockfish south of 40°10' N latitude. Alternatively, if a HG or ACL is established for blackgill, or if blackgill is separated from the slope rockfish complex, an allocation based exclusively on blackgill catch history south of 40°10' N latitude could be considered.

- Currently, low blackgill rockfish sub-limits are constraining the Non-Trawl Sectors directed fishery, and may restrict their access to other target stocks (e.g., sablefish). Since blackgill rockfish can be encountered while targeting sablefish, some amount of blackgill rockfish is necessary in order to prosecute the Non-Trawl sablefish fishery. If the sub-trip limits are low, unaccounted for discarding will occur in the Non-Trawl sector when blackgill rockfish are encountered.
- When catch history for blackgill rockfish is examined separately from the slope complex during those same years (2003-2005), the resulting allocation would be 47% trawl and 53% nontrawl.
- ❖ Defer Nearshore Fishery Management to Oregon and Washington
- ❖ Combine the Fixed Gear Limited Entry Daily Trip Limit Fishery and Tier Fishery
 - This would include selection of a “window period” for qualification and landing history and would include unendorsed permits.

The following four items were added from the sablefish tier review agenda item

- ❖ Convert Daily trip Limits to a Tier Endorsement
- ❖ Combine Longline and Fishpot into a Single Fixed Gear Limited Entry Gear Endorsement
- ❖ Move the Seaward Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) Boundary Line Closer to Shore for Pot Vessels
- ❖ Require All Fishpots be Returned to Shore at the End of Each Trip

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) provided forecasted landings (mt) and attainment (%) for the fixed gear sablefish Daily Trip Limit (DTL) fisheries in 2014. For the area south of 36° N latitude projections under status quo are as follows:

2014 No Action	LE South 36° N Lat	OA South 36° N Lat	South Sum
Landing Target	483	392	875
Projected Landings	516.5	104.4	620.9
Difference	-33.5	287.6	254.1
Percent Attainment	107%	27%	71%

The Council made no changes south of 36° N latitude (Conception Area).

For the limited entry fixed gear sablefish fishery north of 36° N. latitude trip limits were increased to 1 landing per week of up to 1,000 lb., not to exceed 3,000 lb. per 2 months. For the

open access fixed gear sablefish fishery north of 36° N. latitude, trip limits were increased to 350 lb. per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 1,600 lb., not to exceed 3,200 lb. per 2 months.

Final Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Approval for 2015 – 2016

The Council recommended NMFS implement five exempted fishing permit proposals; one proposal to test a vertical hook-and-line gear configuration within the non-trawl RCA in waters off central and northern California to selectively target yellowtail and chilipepper rockfish, and four proposals to test electronic monitoring (EM) in the groundfish Trawl Shorebased IFQ fishery. The Council provided several recommendations to NMFS regarding permit conditions and reporting requirements for the four EM EFP proposals. Those are:

1. Include recommendations specified in Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reports.
2. Require EFP vessels to complete a logbook that includes all estimates of discards (including net bleeds, deck washes, drop offs, etc., including those that do not come aboard the vessel).
3. 100% video review of all EFP trips; review shall be conducted by NMFS or Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission staff (NMFS announced they will perform and pay the cost of video review and possibly pay cost for equipment).
4. A minimum level of observer coverage to meet scientific data collection/biological sampling needs as determined by NMFS.
5. Increased VMS ping rate of four times per hour for all EFP trips, or use of a sufficient data logging tool to accurately record vessel location.
6. An individual vessel monitoring plan that includes adequate amounts and placement of video cameras and lighting to ensure any potential discard events are monitored.
7. A final report with a comparison summary of the logbooks and video data that includes a description of discrepancies in discards between the two. These differences would include the species if possible and fish category (i.e. rockfish, flatfish) if not the amounts, and, geographic review location of where the vessel was fishing when the differences occurred.
8. NMFS to provide a report to the Council that compares fishing locations and catch composition of EFP trips to West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) observer catch composition, and bycatch rates of other or the same vessel fishing in a similar time and location.
9. A minimum EFP duration of two years.

Fixed Gear Sablefish Catch Share Program Review, Including Federal Electronic Fish Tickets for Open Access Sablefish Deliveries

The Council adopted the Limited Entry Fixed Gear program review document, including recommendations for future consideration of a permit price reporting requirement and that another review be scheduled in seven years. Four additional issues were recommended for consideration in the omnibus workload planning agenda item in September. On the electronic fish ticket requirement, the Council adopted an alternative which requires electronic fish tickets for all limited entry and open access landings that include sablefish (limited entry permit numbers would be included on the electronic fish tickets).

Fisheries in 2015 - 2016 and Beyond: Harvest Specifications, Management Measures, and Amendment 24

The Council confirmed the SSC recommended Overfishing Limits (OFLs) including a revised 2016 cowcod OFL. The Council confirmed the overfishing probability (P*s) (except for the following: pacific cod, shortbelly, and yelloweye the P* would be 0.4) and Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs), including a revised 2016 cowcod ABC of 62 mt. The Council confirmed all of the Final Preferred Alternative Annual Catch Limits and confirmed an Annual Catch Target for cowcod of 4mt. Cowcod rebuilding plan parameters were approved, and the Council established a new Ttarget for cowcod, year 2020.

Some notable allocations:

- For blackgill rockfish south of 40°10' N latitude within the slope rockfish complex:
 - 2015 Harvest Guideline of 114 metric tons (mt)
 - 2015 Harvest Guideline of 117 mt
- Fixed gear allocations of blackgill rockfish south of 40°10' N latitude.
 - Limited Entry (LE) 60%
 - Open Access (OA) 40%
- Fixed Gear allocations of sablefish south of 36° N latitude.
 - LE 55%
 - OA 45%
- Set-asides and two year trawl / non-trawl allocations for over fished species (OFS)

Final Preferred Set-Asides and Allocations for Overfished Species

	Bocaccio		Canary		Cowcod		Darkblotched		POP		Petrale		Yelloweye	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
ACL	349	362	122	125	10	10	338	346	158	164	2816	2910	18	19
Set-Asides Total	8.3	8.3	15.2	15.2	2	2	20.8	21	15	15	236.6	236.6	5.83	5.83
Tribal			7.7	7.7	0	0	0.2	0.2	9.2	9.2	220	220	2.3	2.3
FFP	3	3	1	1	0.015	0.015	0.1	0.1					0.03	0.03
Research	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5	2	2	2	2.1	5.2	5.2	14.2	14.2	3.3	3.3
Open Access	0.7	0.7	2	2	0	0	18.4	18.4	0.6	0.6	2.4	2.4	0.2	0.2
Fishery HG	340.7	353.7	106.8	109.8	4	4	317.2	325.2	143	149	2,579.40	2,673.40	12.2	13.2
Trawl Total	81.9	85	56.9	58.5	1.4	1.4	301.3	308.9	135.9	141.6	2,544.40	2,638.40	1	1.1
Shorebased IFQ	81.9	85	43.3	44.5	1.4	1.4	285.6	293	118.5	124	2,539.40	2,633.40	1	1.1
At-Sea Whiting	0		13.7	14			15.7	16.1	17.4	17.4	5	5		
C-P	0		8	8.2			9.2	9.5	10.2	10.2				
Mothership	0		5.6	5.8			6.5	6.7	7.2	7.2				
Non-Trawl Total	258.8	268.7	49.9	51.3	2.6	2.6	15.9	16.3	7.2	7.5	35	35	11.2	12.1
Non-Nearshore	79.1	82.1	3.8	3.9									1.1	1.2
Nearshore FG	1	1	6.7	6.9									1.2	1.3
WA Rec a/	0	0	3.4	3.5									2.9	3.1
OR Rec a/	0	0	11.7	12									2.6	2.8
CA Rec	178.8	185.6	24.3	25									3.4	3.7

❖ The Council moved .5mt of yelloweye from Non-nearshore to Nearshore

Initial Stock Assessment Plans and Terms of Reference (TOR) for Groundfish and Coastal Pelagic Species

The Council adopted the following assessments to be conducted in 2015 for public review:

Full assessments:

1. Black rockfish
2. Bocaccio
3. Canary rockfish
4. Darkblotched rockfish
5. Widow rockfish
6. China rockfish
7. Cowcod
8. Kelp greenling

Update assessments:

1. Petrale sole
2. Sablefish

The black rockfish assessment may be a two-area assessment. The kelp greenling assessment is only for the population off Oregon, and the sablefish assessment could be a full or an update. Further, there may be consideration for an update or data-moderate assessment for arrowtooth flounder.

Final decisions on stock assessment priorities, as well as modifications to the three Terms of Reference guiding future decisions on harvest specifications for groundfish and coastal pelagic species will be made in September.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Boundary Expansion

Council staff will develop a PFMC comment letter indicating a strong concern for the National Marine Sanctuary proposals. Six Council advisory body statements will be appended to the letter (all agenda item C.2.c Supplemental Advisory Body Reports including Supplemental Habitat Committee letter and corrected GAP report).

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

The Council elected Ms. Dorothy Lowman and Mr. Herb Pollard to the positions of Council Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the 2014-2015 term.

The Council appointed Mr. Alan Byrne to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game seat on the Scientific and Statistical Committee replacing Dr. Charlie Petrosky.

The Council appointed Mr. Dave Bitts to the California Commercial Troll seat on the Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) for the remainder of the 2013-2015 term.

The Council appointed Mr. Greg Johnson to the Commercial Gillnet seat on the SAS for the remainder of the 2013-2015 term.

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for September 10 thru 17 at the Doubletree by Hilton Spokane City Center, 322 N. Spokane Falls Court, Spokane, WA. The Preliminary Proposed Agenda represents the agenda expectations for the September 2014 Council meeting and includes among other things:

Administrative

1. Legislative Matters
2. Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

Highly Migratory Species

1. Update on Regulatory Matters and International Issues
2. Preliminary EFP Approval
3. Routine Management Measures ROA

Ecosystem

1. Unmanaged Forage Fish Protection Initiative FPA

Groundfish

1. Omnibus Regulation Changes
2. Final Stock Assessment Plan
3. Electronic Monitoring Regulatory Process FPA and Next Steps
4. Consideration of In-Season Adjustments

This report is provided to the Central Coast Community in 2014 via a grant to the Morro Bay Community Quota Fund from the Central California Joint Cable Fisheries Liaison Committee. Any interested parties may request an email copy of future reports (as long as funding continues) by contacting Christopher Kubiak at, ckub@sbcglobal.net ¶

