



Christopher Kubiak Fishery Services
*Research * Consulting * Advocacy*

**REPORT FROM THE PACIFIC FISHERY
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING**
November 13 - 19, 2014

OPEN COMMENT PERIOD

Comments on Non-Agenda Items

The Council received several comment letters from fishermen based in Santa Barbara, California. The letters detailed a perceived gear conflict between vessels targeting sablefish with fishpots and vessels using longlines. The Vice-President of an association, Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara, provided comment in person, and asked the Council to require vessels using fishpots to retrieve all of their pot gear, and return the gear to port during offloads. The Council has discussed a pot gear retrieval requirement for the Limited Entry Fixed Gear Sector under the "Groundfish Omnibus", and determined to move forward with development of alternatives through an Ad-hoc Committee (September 2014). This matter will also be considered within the Trawl Rationalization Five-Year Review (Gear Switching Provision).

The Council directed staff to send two letters detailing concerns about the proposed closure of the United States Coast Guard air facility in Newport, Oregon, which would eliminate the rescue helicopter capabilities operating out of that station, and making the recommendation that closure of the air facility be rescinded. One letter is to be addressed to the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Paul Zunkunft with particular emphasis on safety at sea as a justification for maintaining status quo helicopter deployment capabilities. A separate letter is to be addressed to Senator Jeff Merkley in response to his request for a Pacific Council perspective on this issue, with particular emphasis on possible fiscal or legislative solutions.

SALMON MANAGEMENT

Preseason Salmon Management Schedule for 2015

The Council adopted a schedule for the 2015 preseason salmon management process. The schedule is as follows:

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL SCHEDULE AND PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING 2015 OCEAN SALMON FISHERY MANAGEMENT MEASURES

- Nov. 14 - 19, 2014 The Council and advisory entities meet at the Hilton Orange County, Costa Mesa, California, to consider any changes to methodologies used in the development of abundance projections or regulatory alternatives.
- Jan. 20 - 23, 2015 The Salmon Technical Team (STT) meet in Portland, Oregon to draft The Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document Review of 2014 Ocean Salmon Fisheries. This report summarizes seasons, quotas, harvest, escapement, socioeconomic statistics, achievement of management goals, and impacts on species listed under the Endangered Species Act. (Available early February.)
- Feb. 17 - 20 STT meets in Portland, Oregon to complete Preseason Report I Stock Abundance Analysis and Environmental Assessment Part 1 for 2015 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations. This report provides key salmon stock abundance estimates and level of precision, harvest, and escapement estimates when recent regulatory regimes are projected on 2015 abundance, and other pertinent information to aid development of management options. (Available early March.)
- Feb. 23 thru March 7 State and tribal agencies hold constituent meetings to review preseason abundance projections and range of probable fishery options.
- Mar. 7 - 12 Council and advisory entities meet at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Vancouver, Washington to adopt 2015 regulatory alternatives for public review. The Council addresses inseason action for fisheries opening prior to May 1 and adopts tentative alternatives for STT analysis on March 9 and final alternatives for public review on March 12.
- Mar. 13 - 19 The STT completes Preseason Report II: Proposed Alternatives and Environmental Assessment Part 2 for 2015 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations. (Available March 20.)
- Mar. 17 - 31 Management agencies, tribes, and public develop their final recommendations for the regulatory alternatives. North of Cape Falcon Forum meetings are tentatively scheduled for March 16-18 and March 31- April 2.
- Mar. 20 Council staff distributes Preseason Report II: Proposed Alternatives and Environmental Assessment Part 2 for 2015 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations to the public. The report includes the public hearing schedule, comment instructions, alternative highlights, and tables summarizing the biological and economic impacts of the proposed management alternatives.
- Mar. 30 - 31 Sites and dates of public hearings to review the Council's proposed regulatory options are: Westport, Washington (March 30); Coos Bay, Oregon (March 30); and Fort Bragg, California (March 31). Comments on the alternatives will also be taken during the April Council meeting in Rohnert Park, California.
- Apr. 11 - 16 Council and advisory entities meet to adopt final regulatory measures at the DoubleTree by Hilton Sonoma in Rohnert Park, California. Preseason Report II: Proposed Alternatives and Environmental Assessment Part 2 for 2015 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations, results from the public hearings, and information developed at the Council meeting are considered during the course of the week. The Council will tentatively adopt final regulatory measures for analysis by the STT on April 11. Final adoption of recommendations to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is tentatively scheduled to be completed on April 15.
- Apr. 17 - 24 The STT and Council staff complete Preseason Report III: Analysis of Council-Adopted Management Measures and Environmental Assessment Part 3 for 2015 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations (Available April 24). Council and NMFS staff completes required National Environmental Policy Act documents for submission.
- Apr. 24 Council staff distributes adopted ocean salmon fishing management recommendations, and Preseason Report III is available to the public.
- May 1 NMFS implements Federal ocean salmon fishing regulations.

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The final 2015-2016 harvest specifications and management measures will likely be implemented March 1, 2015. Therefore, 2014 harvest specifications and management measures will stay in place for the start of the 2015 calendar year. For harvest specifications, this means that the 2014 Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) are the limits that we are managing to at the start of 2015. For management measures, this generally means that the seasons and limits that were in place in Jan-Feb 2014 will be in place in Jan-Feb 2015 because the Council did not take any inseason action for Commercial Fisheries.

The Council considered the higher than expected catches of black rockfish and California scorpionfish in the California recreational fishery in 2014 and recommended recreational fishery inseason adjustments for 2015. Specifically, a five fish black rockfish sub-bag limit within the ten fish rockfish, cabezon and greenling bag limit would be implemented in 2015. Additionally, retention of California scorpionfish in the California recreational fisheries would be prohibited from September through December 2015.

Widow Rockfish Reallocation and Divestiture Issues

For Widow Rockfish Reallocation:

The Council adopted a Range of Alternatives, the four Alternatives are as follows:

Alternative 1	No Action – status quo
Alternative 2	<p>Reallocate widow quota shares using the Amendment 20 target species allocation formula (a portion to all permits equally and a portion to permits based on landings history between 1994-2002).</p> <p>Under this alternative, the Amendment 21 allocation rules for widow rockfish under rebuilt status would be applied to the 2016 trawl allocations.</p> <p> Suboption A: The 2016 trawl allocations based on the 2016 ABC Suboption B: The 2016 trawl allocations based on the 2016 ACL</p>
Alternative 3	<p>Reallocate widow rockfish using non-whiting groundfish revenue between 2003-2010 as a proxy for recent participation. The equal sharing component, set-aside for whiting, and adaptive management would come off the top and then the remaining quota is computed 50% by the revenue proxy (2003-2010) and 50% by the landings history 1994-2002.</p> <p> Suboption A: 50% revenue across years 2003-2010 would include “drop years”; as done in the original analysis.</p>
Alternative 4	<p>Leave a base amount of quota share un-reallocated such that in 2016 every permit would receive the same amount of quota pounds that they received in 2014 and reallocate the remainder (difference between 2014 and 2016 landings) using the historic landings formula (a portion to all permits equally and a portion to permits based on landings history between 1994-2002).</p>

For the Widow Rockfish Divestiture Deadline:

The Council adopted an alternative that would require complete divestiture twelve months following reallocation of widow rockfish.

For the Aggregate Limit Divestiture Deadline:

The Council adopted a Range of Alternatives, the four alternatives are as follows:

Alternative 1	No Action (current divestiture deadline of November 15, 2015)
Alternative 2	Exclude widow rockfish from the non-whiting aggregate control limit until 12 months following the implementation of the widow reallocation
Alternative 3	Extend the aggregate control limit deadline to coincide with the widow control limit
Alternative 4	Delay the non-whiting aggregate control limit until the implementation of any regulatory changes developed pursuant to the first program review for the trawl rationalization program (the November 15, 2015 deadline would still apply to all individual species except widow)

For Revoking Forfeited Quota Shares in Complex Situations:

The Council adopted two alternatives as follows:

Alternative 1	Provide Quota Share (QS) owners with an opportunity to abandon QS (choose the species and amounts) to NMFS prior to the divestiture deadline, for redistribution among QS holders, rather than going through the forfeiture process after the divestiture deadline.
Alternative 2	<p>Forced Divestiture for Individual Species Control Limits</p> <p>While not directly related to the widow rockfish reallocation, NMFS has developed a proposed method by which to force divestiture in cases where QS permit owners have not divested of non-widow species by November 30, 2015.</p> <p>If one QS permit owner was over an individual species control limit by 1%, the regulations are clear that NMFS would revoke and redistribute that 1% to the remainder of the QS or IBQ owners in proportion to their QS or IBQ holdings (§ 660.140 (d)(4)(v)). However, if an individual person held full or partial ownership in 5 QS permits and exceeded a control limit by 1% for a certain species across those QS permits, it is unclear how NMFS would revoke QS across permits.</p> <p>NMFS proposes to revoke QS from each QS permit in proportion to the amount owned by the individual in each permit.</p> <p>Forced Divestiture for Aggregate Nonwhiting</p> <p>In addition to potential issues with divestiture of individual species, the regulations do not currently describe a method for NMFS to revoke and redistribute QS if a business entity or individual is over the aggregate nonwhiting control limit of 2.7%. NMFS proposes to use a similar method as above – that is, use a proportion (overage/total amount owned, in terms of 2010 shorebased trawl allocations) to determine how much to revoke from each non-whiting, non-halibut species.</p>

Initial Consideration of Blackgill Rockfish Intersector Allocation

The Council adopted a schedule and process to restructure the southern slope rockfish complex south of 40°10' north latitude, to address the blackgill intersector allocation matters described in the briefing materials and advisory body reports. The process includes removing blackgill rockfish from the southern Slope Rockfish complex and reallocating both blackgill

rockfish and the remaining species in the southern Slope Rockfish complex to trawl and non-trawl sectors. The goal is that final Council action on this matter would be taken prior to conducting the analysis to inform harvest specifications and management measures for 2017/2018 [In advance of the November 2015 Council Meeting]. The schedule for this initiative includes the Council adopting a preliminary preferred alternative at the April 2015 Council meeting and a final preferred alternative at the June 2015 Council meeting.

Reconsideration of Open Access Registration under Amendment 22

The Council voted to rescind their recommendation to create a registry of open access groundfish fishermen originally adopted under Amendment 22. The Council believes the costs of creating a registry outweigh the benefits and the rescission would free up resources to advance other higher priority initiatives

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT

National Marine Fisheries Service Report

Reopen Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBF) Commercial Fishery

Based on a recommendation from the Pacific Council at its September 2014 meeting, NMFS is proposing to reopen the U.S. commercial PBF fishery and, as an emergency action, impose a 1 metric ton (mt) trip limit for PBF. The fishery with a trip limit would remain open until the 500 mt catch limit, established under Resolution C-13-02 of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, is reached. This action would be effective through December 31, 2014, in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). This vacates the closure made by NMFS on September 5, 2014, because updated information indicates that only 404 mt of the 500 mt catch limit was taken and that, based on preliminary data, the fishery was closed prematurely.

Bigeye Tuna Closure

The most recent catch and landings data available indicate that the 2014 catch limit of 500 mt is expected to be reached; therefore, NMFS is closing the U.S. pelagic longline fishery for bigeye tuna to vessels over 24 meters in overall length in the EPO. This closure will be effective on October 31, 2014, and remain in effect through December 31, 2014. This action is necessary to prevent the fishery from exceeding the applicable catch limit established by Resolution C-13-01 of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, which governs tropical tuna conservation and management in the EPO from 2014-2016.

Final Rulemaking for Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Pre-trip Notification (PTN)

The public comment period for the proposed rule (79 FR 54950, September 15, 2014) to implement mandatory VMS and PTN requirements for swordfish/thresher shark large-mesh drift gillnet vessels closed on September 30, 2014. Three public comments were received and

will be addressed in the final rule. NMFS is in the process of preparing the final rulemaking package which is expected to be completed by mid-November. The rule is expected to be effective immediately upon publishing in the Federal Register.

Pacific Bluefin Tuna Petition

NMFS received over 400 comments on the Center for Biological Diversity's (CBD) petition. NMFS will consider these public comments and recommendations received in determining whether to proceed with the development of the regulations requested by the CBD. A decision is expected before the end of the year.

Update on Regulatory Matters and International Activities

The Council made the following recommendation to NMFS on implementing the Pacific bluefin tuna commercial catch limit of 600 metric tons (mt) for 2015-2016, as contained in Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Resolution C-14-06:

- A trip limit of 20 mt until 250 mt is caught.
- After 250 mt is caught, the trip limit is reduced to 2 mt for the remainder of the year.
- In the event of any landing exceeding the trip limit, the overage amount would be forfeited to the State of California.
- NMFS should seek non-punitive ways to discourage discarding fish at sea.

The Council also recommends NMFS develop the proper contingency regulations implementing the intent of Resolution C-14-06 regarding catch limits in 2016 depending on catch in 2015. The catch in any one year cannot exceed 425 mt and if catch exceeds 300 mt in 2015 then the catch limit for 2016 will be 200 mt or less. In general, catch in 2015 is deducted from the 600 mt two-year limit to determine the catch limit in 2016. These conditions will likely require additional measures to account for catches approaching 425 mt in either year and for the possibility that the catch limit in 2016 could be less than 250 mt, depending on catch in 2015.

Drift Gillnet Fishery Hard Caps and Other Adopted Priorities for 2015-2016 Fisheries

The Council discussed their general policy intent for the drift gillnet (DGN) fishery and made several decisions about (1) the pursuit of hard caps as a primary management measure in the DGN fishery and (2) other previously adopted Highly Migratory Species (HMS) fishery priorities. The Council also took the following actions:

1. Directed staff to send a letter to NMFS in response to the NMFS Report and letter contained in the Briefing Book. The Council's letter will clarify that the Council's intent in selecting its Preliminary Preferred Alternatives (PPA's) for management of the California large mesh drift gillnet fishery via hard caps for marine mammals and sea turtles:

- Take into account the best available science and population status of marine mammals and sea turtles and are intended to avoid potential conflicts with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA), but, are not intended as an attempt to manage the population of these animals through MSA.
2. Directed the HMS Management Team and Council staff to prepare a draft Purpose and Need Statement for a Drift Gillnet Management and Monitoring Plan, including its goal and objectives, for the Council’s consideration in March, 2015.
 3. Revised the Range of Alternatives in the HMSMT Report that is out for Public Review. The Council adopted the following as a Preliminary Preferred Alternative in September, 2014:

Regarding Hard Caps

- a. Application of hard caps would be aligned with the fishing season (August 15 – January 31) – PPA
- b. Hard caps would apply to fishery mortality and/or serious injury (M/SI) – PPA
- c. At a minimum, annual hard caps would be in place for high priority protected species (i.e. Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed, and those with an annual M/SI of greater than or equal to 10% Potential Biological Removal (PBR)). Species: fin, humpback, short finned pilot, and sperm whales; leatherback, loggerhead, olive ridley, and green sea turtles – PPA
- d. Hard caps may also be considered for the other species listed in HMSMT Report 3, p. 7.

Table 1; Mammals Annual Take

Species	Annual Take
Humpback Whale	Up to 2
Sperm Whale	Up to 2
Leatherback Turtle	Up to 3
Loggerhead Turtle	Up to 3
Species	Annual Mortality/ Serious Injury (Not Take)
Fin Whale	Up to 2
Olive Ridley Turtle	Up to 2
Green Turtle	Up to 2

Regarding other mammals not covered in Table 1

The Council adopted Table 2 for public review. These are performance objectives (annual catch targets that should not be exceeded) not hard caps. This includes the following species and annual performance objectives for 2015:

Table 2; Species With Performance Objectives

Species	Annual Catch Target
Short-Finned Pilot Whale	2
Minke Whale	0
Grey Whale	1
Short Beaked Common Dolphin	9
Long Beaked Common Dolphin	5
Pacific White-Sided Common Dolphin	3
Northern Wright Whale Dolphin	3
Risso's Dolphin	1
Bottlenose Dolphin	1
California Sea Lion	18
Northern Elephant Seal	1

Note: this excludes the "unidentified" common dolphin

Regarding Finfish

The Council Identified a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) regarding finfish bycatch as follows:

Establish performance objectives, not hard caps, but rather as annual catch targets that should not be exceeded as discard mortality for specific fish (from HMSMT Report using the annual average dead removals).

- Blue Sharks - 143
- Mola - 68
- Marlins - 28

For both non-ESA listed Mammals and Finfish, include a one-year only rollover option.

Regarding Observability

The Council adopted alternatives for analysis that include:

- Removing the un-observable exemption; Currently, vessels that are determined unsuitable to carry an observer (for safety or accommodation reasons) are exempted from the requirement to carry observers. Under this alternative the exemption would be removed. Unobservable vessels would not be able to participate in the fishery unless they made necessary upgrades to allow them to carry an observer.
- By the 2018 fishing season the fishery would be 100% monitored – at the current level of human observers, with Electronic Monitoring (EM) (for the purpose of catch and bycatch accounting) on all other vessels.
- Maintain a minimum of 33% observer coverage level, remove the unobservable vessel exemption, and allow individual vessels the flexibility to contract with an approved observer provider company.

- Maintain a minimum of 50% observer coverage level, remove the unobservable vessel exemption, and allow individual vessels the flexibility to contract with an approved observer provider company.
4. Under Calculation of Take Caps, clarified that the annual hard cap numbers for the Preliminary Preferred Alternative are based on the Council's objectives to reduce bycatch. Given that Incidental Take Statement values reflect fishery take estimates over a five-year time period, by using these numbers, the Council indicated its preference to not allow the fishery to exceed these estimates.
 5. For the Observer Coverage Alternatives, added the following:
 - Across all alternatives, the Council recognizes that NMFS funding for observer coverage and/or electronic monitoring is limited. The Council requests that, prior to each fishing year, NMFS inform the Council of the level of observer coverage/EM that NMFS would be able to fund. The balance of the costs associated with observer coverage/EM requirements would be non-government funded.
 6. Identified that, while all of the issues addressed by these alternatives are important, for the purpose of focusing attention on the regulatory changes for the 2015-2016 fishing year, the implementation of hard caps for high priority protected species and increasing observer coverage/EM are of higher priority than performance objectives/bycatch reduction targets for non-ESA listed marine mammals and finfish.
 7. Directed the HMSMT to develop a monitoring plan for the drift gillnet fishery for the Council's consideration in June 2015. Specifically, the HMSMT needs to identify the steps and timeline to transition the drift gillnet fishery to 100% monitoring, which could be a combination of human observer coverage and EM. In developing the plan, consider the need to evaluate EM efficacy, and requirements on the number and placement of cameras, the level of video review, and the costs.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for March 7 thru 12, 2015, at the Hilton Vancouver Washington, 301 W. Sixth Street, Vancouver, Washington. The Preliminary Proposed Agenda represents the agenda expectations for the March 2015 Council meeting and includes among other things:

Administrative

1. Legislative Matters
2. NMFS Strategic Plan Update
3. Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

Salmon

1. Review of 2014 Fisheries & Summary of 2015 Stock Abundance Forecasts
2. Identify Management Objectives & Preliminary Definition of 2015 Management Alternatives
3. Adopt 2015 Management Alternatives for Public Review
4. Appoint Salmon Hearing Officers

Ecosystem

1. Unmanaged Forage Fish Protection Initiative

Highly Migratory Species

1. Recommendations for International Management Activities Including US Canada Albacore Treaty Update
2. Prohibited Species Issues Update
3. Final EFP Approval
4. Drift Gillnet Management Plan Including Hard Caps FPA

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 



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By: Christopher Kubiak
*The Power of Being First With
Innovation*