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**REPORT FROM THE PACIFIC FISHERY
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING**
November 12 – 17, 2015 Hyatt Regency
Garden Grove, California



SALMON MANAGEMENT

Preseason Salmon Management Schedule for 2016

The Council approved the 2014 salmon management schedule ([Attachment 1](#)) including plans for public hearings in Westport, Washington and Coos Bay, Oregon on March 28, 2016, and Fort Bragg, California on March 29, 2016.

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report

NMFS has received a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request on the Trawl Individual Quota Share (Trawl IFQ) Divestiture Rule. The request is extensive, and includes everything on the divestiture rule, all records from 2003 - 2010. Because NMFS is required to comply with the FOIA request immediately, staff will be redirected to work on the FOIA request, and other matters will be delayed.

In September 2015, the Council approved 20 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Bottom Trawl Alternatives for additional analysis, and 18 Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) Alternatives for additional analysis as well as an alternative for closure to bottom trawling in deep water. NMFS has reviewed these actions and anticipates an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) is needed. Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS will publish in late December, 2015 or early January, 2016. The full range of the September motion will be captured in the EIS analysis, and the Council may refine the alternatives in April 2016 with selection of a range preliminary preferred alternatives.

A recent rule that allows additional Trawl IFQ observer/catch monitor providers has resulted in four new applicants for approval as observer/catch monitor providers. Those applications are currently under review.

NMFS conducted a small port listening tour to hear issues related to the Trawl IFQ Program. They visited the ports of Morro Bay, Monterey, Moss Landing, Half Moon Bay, Fort Bragg, and Eureka in California, and Coos Bay, Oregon. The tour was conducted over 7 days and included 8 meetings with 46 people (processors, fishermen, NGO's, and coastal community members). Discussion topics were chosen by the people that NMFS met with, and several issues were identified including:

- Program costs, particularly those for observers and catch monitors, are having a significant impact, and are changing how people fish.
 - Fishing operations are now focused on making the most money in the shortest amount of time. Less fishing trips, but the trips are more intense.
- There is a lack of available quota for certain species, particularly sablefish, petrale, and overfished species.

- Fishermen feel there are not enough places to sell fish. However, processors report that they do not have enough product for year-round operations, and often their lines are empty (less than half the processing capacity is utilized now compared to pre IFQ).
- Instability. PFMC actions have many of the fishery participants worried. If someone develops a program or plan of action, they believe the Council will somehow undermine their plan.
- The Adaptive Management Program (AMP) is a concern. Fishery participants are worried they will lose Quota Pounds and they are struggling now because they do not have enough quota to begin with.
 - There was support for some sort of community fund to cover lightning strikes and/or for new entrants.
 - Some wanted the exact opposite; use AMP to help existing participants that are struggling - not new entrants.

As a result of the listening tour, a workshop will be held in Portland, Oregon to address these issues, and develop ideas that the Council, NMFS, and fishery participants can use to improve the Trawl IFQ Program.

Preliminary Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Approval

The Council received four Preliminary EFP Applications, as follows:

1. Collaborative fishing to test pot gear for selective harvest of lingcod off of Washington and Oregon; Applicant The Nature Conservancy of Washington and Oregon
2. Proposal to relieve mothership processors from the prohibition against processing South of 42°N latitude.; Applicant United Catcher Boats
3. Exempted Fishing Permit Application for At-sea Processing of Pacific Whiting by Catcher-Processor Vessels South of 42°N latitude; Applicant, Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative
4. Commercial Midwater Hook & Line Rockfish Fishing in the RCA off the Oregon Coast; Applicant, Scott Cook

The Council approved only one application for further consideration in the 2017/18 Management Cycle, the EFP proposed by The Nature Conservancy for testing lingcod selective pot gear, with the condition that fishing off the Washington Coast is limited to those waters westward of a line approximating the seventy five fathom depth contour.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has received inquiries from approximately eight vessels that are interested in joining the in progress Electronic Monitoring EFPs next year, including approximately six bottom trawl, one longline, and one demersal seine. NMFS notified the Council they are interested in working with these vessels and would like to add them to the EFP program next year. In addition, NMFS requested the Council support extending the duration of the in progress EFPs (currently approved for 2015/16).

The Council approved NMFS ability to add additional [up to twenty] vessels to the in progress EFPs, and also recommended the in progress EFPs be extended beyond the 2015/16 management cycle.

Biennial Harvest Specifications for 2017-18 Groundfish Management Including Final Overfishing Limits and Acceptable Biological Catches

The Council adopted final overfishing limits (OFLs) and stock category designations that were recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The Council also adopted final acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for all stocks and final annual catch limits (ACLs) for all stocks and complexes except for black rockfish in California, California scorpionfish, canary rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, and widow rockfish; for those species the Council established a range of alternative ACLs for detailed analysis. The Council is scheduled to adopt all remaining final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications at their April 2016 meeting in Vancouver, Washington.

Whiting Electronic Monitoring Final Alternative and Regulations

The Council made the following changes to the final preferred alternative for Electronic Monitoring (EM) for the Whiting Fishery:

- The preferred alternative is now Alternative 3, rather than Alternative 2. Alternative 3 requires video recording as the data source to replace data collected by human observers, logbooks would be required, with video recordings used to audit the accuracy of logbooks. Initially 100% auditing will be required with the ability to modify the audit percentage based on performance and consultation with the Council.
- Video reviews will be conducted by a third party provider, and the industry will be responsible for paying for the review. The payment responsibility provision is a change from the prior policy that directed NMFS (or their agent) to conduct and pay for video reviews until a third party provider certification process was established in regulation.
- Remove the Discard Species List Adjustment option because the whiting fishery will be a maximized retention fishery whereby no discard would be allowed. This negates the need for an allowable discard species list and a Council mechanism to adjust the list in the future. Should this option be needed in the future, the Council will revisit the issue.
- Discard logbooks and state logbooks must be postmarked and submitted to Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission within 24 hours of landing.
- Under discard accounting for the mothership fishery, the Council revised their preferred Discard Accounting from Option D (Deduct "Unintentional Minor" Discards Preseason) to Option A (Estimate Discard with EM and Count against IFQ).
- No regulations were finalized via the deeming process at this Council meeting.

The Council scheduled final deeming of detailed Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) style whiting fishery regulations for the April 2016 Council meeting. The Council also adjusted the schedule for reaching finality on Fixed Gear EM regulations and Bottom Trawl EM regulations by:

- 1) Scheduling an EFP results update for the March 2016 Council meeting to cover both remaining sectors (Fixed Gear and Bottom Trawl);
- 2) Scheduling deeming of CFR-style Fixed Gear EM regulations for the April 2016 Council meeting; and,
- 3) Scheduling the next consideration of Bottom Trawl EM regulations for the November 2016 Council meeting.

Blackgill-Slope Complex Final Reallocation and Accumulation Limits

Stock complexes are aggregations of stocks managed in a single unit under harvest specifications decided for the complex in its entirety. Stocks managed in a complex should be sufficiently similar in geographic distribution, life history, and vulnerabilities to the fishery such that the impact of management actions on the complex component stocks is similar. In April, 2013, the Council determined there was a need to evaluate and consider changes to the structure of stock complex groupings. The Council considered alternatives that are intended to evaluate aggregations of species that represent a better management alignment of species according to their ecological distributions, interactions with the fishery, and relative vulnerabilities to overfishing.

In November 2013, NMFS provided a report informing the Council that the Agency had come to the conclusion that further analysis of removing Blackgill, Rougheye, and Shortraker from the Minor Slope Rockfish Complex was warranted and necessary to keep these stocks within their contributory OFLs to the Minor Slope Rockfish Complex (both North and South of 40° 10' N latitude). The most recent blackgill rockfish stock assessment conducted was completed in 2011. The NMFS recommendation was based on this most recent assessment, and, the change in the perception of blackgill stock status, and, the need to reduce mortality.

In April 2014, the Council recommended to continue managing blackgill rockfish within the Minor Slope Rockfish Complex, and, established a harvest guideline reflecting the recent stock assessment results. A sorting requirement was also implemented to improve inseason tracking of blackgill rockfish in all sectors. In the Council discussion, it was stated that "Managing to individual components adds complexity for managers and harvesters. If there is no conservation need, the Council should prioritize management simplicity, not complexity. Total mortality of the Slope Rockfish Complex has been below the ACL in recent years, and the ACL is expected to only increase in 2015-2016 based on previous decisions. In this respect, the current complexes are working and the corresponding management measures are also working."

In June 2014 under the Omnibus Regulation Changes Agenda Item, "Blackgill Rockfish Allocation" was added to the Priority List of Groundfish Management Measures.

In November 2014, The Council decided to restructure the Minor Slope Rockfish South of 40° 10' N latitude Complex by: removing blackgill rockfish from the Complex, and, reallocating both blackgill rockfish and the remaining species in the Complex to limited entry trawl and non-trawl sectors.

At the November 2015 meeting, the Council took final action on blackgill rockfish allocation, removing blackgill rockfish from the Minor Slope Rockfish South of 40° 10' N latitude Complex and managing blackgill rockfish as a single species. In addition, the remaining species in the Minor Slope Rockfish South of 40° 10' N latitude Complex and blackgill rockfish will be reallocated as shown in **Table 1**. No change was made to IFQ accumulation limits for these species.

NMFS reported full implementation of this action on blackgill rockfish will not occur before January 1, 2018.

Table 1. Council Preferred Allocations for Minor Slope Rockfish South of 40° 10' N. Complex and Blackgill Rockfish

Allocation Basis	Minor Slope Rockfish South		Blackgill Rockfish	
	LE Trawl Alloc. %	Non-trawl Alloc.%	LE Trawl Alloc. %	Non-trawl Alloc.%
2003 - 2013 Total Catch	91.0%	9.0%	41.0%	59.0%

Biennial Management Measures for 2017 - 2018 Groundfish Fisheries

The Council revised the blackgill rockfish 2017 - 2018 ACL (120.2 mt and 123.0mt respectively) and the resulting Minor Slope Rockfish Complex 2017-2018 ACL with blackgill rockfish removed.

Table 2. Revised Minor Slope Rockfish South of 40° 10' N latitude Complex ACL With Blackgill Rockfish Removed

Management Year	Status Quo Slope S. ACL (Includes Blackgill Rockfish)	Revised Slope S. ACL (Blackgill Rockfish Removed)
2017	707.0	586.8
2018	709	586

In addition the Council:

- Took final action to reclassify the big skate designation in the Fishery Management Plan from an ecosystem component species to a species actively managed in the fishery beginning in 2017. Big skate would be managed using stock-specific harvest specifications with cumulative landing limits and a sorting requirement.
- Set off-the-top deductions for:
 - Research using 2016 values except for canary rockfish (7.2mt) and petrale (17.7mt).
 - Incidental Open Access using 2016 values except for darkblotched rockfish, pacific ocean perch, and petrale (use maximum catch approach).
- Set Annual Catch Targets (ACTs) for cowcod (4mt, *status quo*) and California scorpionfish (111mt).
- Developed alternatives for Limited Entry Trawl/Non-Trawl inter-sector allocations of Overfished Species (OFS) using the September 2015 scorecard as the starting point and adding recommendations from the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (use status quo; except analyze small shifts for bocaccio and canary), and Groundfish Management Team.
- Developed alternatives for analysis for Limited Entry Fixed Gear/Open Access sector allocations for:
 - Blackgill Rockfish; 70% LEFG and 30% OA in addition to status quo (60% LE and 40% OA).
 - Sablefish; 75% LE and 25% OA in addition to status quo (55% LE and 45% OA).
- For canary rockfish allocation alternatives, the Council included the sector-specific range of allocations based on a period of targeting (1990-1999), a period when targeting was

prohibited (2000-2014), the 2009-2010 allocations (pre-IFQ), and the current allocations (2015-2016), applied to the 2017-2018 ACL alternatives (No Action, Alternative 1, Alternative 2) to calculate potential future allocations.

Consideration of Inseason Adjustments

The Council considered the progress to date of the shorebased individual fishing quota program and recommended big skate trip limits for 2016 of 5,000 pounds/2 months for Period 1, 25,000 pounds/2 months for Period 2, 30,000 pounds/2 months for Period 3, 35,000 pounds/2 months for Period 4, 10,000 pounds/2 months for Period 5, and 5,000 pounds/2 months for Period 6.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Fiscal Matters

The Council approved a Provisional Council Year 2016 Operating Budget of \$4,767,288, and tasked the Executive Director with pursuing additional funding for special projects not funded by routine funding, those are as follows in priority order:

- Remaining amount in the 2015 request for Fishery Ecosystem Plan implementation and the groundfish EFH amendment (\$228,315);
- Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping assistance for the groundfish EFH project (\$25,000);
- Groundfish IFQ Program 5 year review (~\$400,000 for 2016-2017);
- Development of an alternative Sacramento River Winter Chinook control rule change (\$57,000 for 2016-2017); and,
- One full-time-equivalent Staff Officer for Highly Migratory Species and Council Coordination Committee emphasis, as well as other Fishery Management Plan implementation priorities identified by the Council after funding is received (~\$132,000 annually).

Membership Appointments and Council Operating Procedures

The Council selected Advisory Body members for the 2016-2018 Advisory Body Term for the:

- Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)—7 at-large members
- Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS)—all 10 members
- Ecosystem Advisory Subpanel (EAS)—all 9 members
- Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP)—all 21 members
- Highly Migratory Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS)—all 13 members
- Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS)—all 15 members
- Habitat Committee (HC)—4 non-agency members, the Northwest or Columbia River tribal member, and the California tribal member

Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for March 8 – 14, 2016 at the Doubletree Hotel Sacramento, California. The Preliminary Proposed Agenda represents the agenda expectations for the March 2016 Council meeting and includes among other things:

Administrative

1. Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

Ecosystem

1. California Current Ecosystem & IEA Report
2. FEP Indicators & Climate Shift Initiatives Update

Salmon

1. NMFS Report
2. Review of 2015 Fisheries & Summary of 2016 Stock Abundance Forecasts
3. Chinook FRAM Base Period Comanager Update
4. Identify Management Objectives & Preliminary Definition of 2016 Management Alternatives, Including Test Fishery Alternatives
5. Recommendations for 2016 Management Alternative Analysis
6. Adopt 2016 Management Alternatives for Public Review
7. Appoint Salmon Hearing Officers
8. Sacramento River Winter Chinook Control Rule Update

Groundfish

1. California Midwater Commercial EFP Consideration
2. 2017 - 2018 Fisheries Check-in
3. Consideration of Inseason Adjustments
4. Electronic Monitoring EFP Update
5. Salmon Consultation Update
6. Midwater Sport Regulations Final
7. Gear Changes FPA

Highly Migratory Species Management

1. Report on Ongoing EFPs
2. Deep Set Buoy Gear Amendment Scoping
3. Recommend International Activities Management

There are two Briefing Book deadlines for every Council meeting. The first (and main) deadline is two and a half weeks before the Council meeting. Public comments and reports that are supplied before this deadline are included in the advance Briefing Book. The second deadline, known as the supplemental deadline, is four days prior to the start of the Council meeting. Public comments and reports provided by this deadline are given to Council members on the first day of the Council meeting. Comments can be emailed, mailed, or faxed to the Council.

- ☼ This report is provided to the Central Coast Community in 2015 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 ☮

Prepared December 30, 2015
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Attachment 1

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL SCHEDULE AND PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING 2016 OCEAN SALMON FISHERY MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Nov. 13-19, 2015

The Council and advisory entities meet at the Hyatt Regency Orange County, Garden Grove, California, to consider any changes to methodologies used in the development of abundance projections or regulatory alternatives.

Jan. 19-22, 2016

The Salmon Technical Team (STT) meet in Portland, Oregon to draft The Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document *Review of 2015 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. 16-19

STT meets in Portland, Oregon to complete *Preseason Report I Stock Abundance Analysis and Environmental Assessment Part 1 for 2016 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 2016 abundance, and other pertinent information to aid development of management options. (Available early March.)

Feb. 22
through
Mar. 7

State and tribal agencies hold constituent meetings to review preseason abundance projections and range of probable fishery options.

Mar. 9-14

Council and advisory entities meet at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Sacramento, California to adopt 2016 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 10 and final alternatives for public review on March 14.

Mar. 15-21

The STT completes *Preseason Report II: Proposed Alternatives and Environmental Assessment Part 2 for 2016 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations*. (Available March 22.)

Mar. 15-31

Management agencies, tribes, and public develop their final recommendations for the

regulatory alternatives. North of Cape Falcon Forum meetings are *tentatively* scheduled for March 16-17 and March 29-31.

Mar. 22

Council staff distributes *Preseason Report II: Proposed Alternatives and Environmental Assessment Part 2 for 2016 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.