

Summary

Meeting dates: September 8-9, 2017

Agenda item: Federal Overfishing Determination - Briefing

Presenter(s): Michele Culver, Intergovernmental Ocean Policy Manager

Background summary:

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). PFMC manages fisheries off the West Coast in Pacific Ocean waters in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extends from 3 to 200 miles offshore. Regional councils manage fisheries through the development of Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and provide recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce and the National Marine Fisheries Service relative to annual catch limits (or quotas) for the stocks managed under the plans and regulations to ensure those catch limits are not exceeded.

The MSA outlines the requirements for FMPs, which includes Status Determination Criteria. As the name implies, these criteria are used by the councils to assess the status of each stock managed under the FMP. Each FMP includes a list of Management Unit Species (MUS), which are the stocks that are managed by the FMP. The MUS are then broken down further into stock classifications: those that are “in the fishery” and those that are characterized as “ecosystem component” stocks. All of the MUS are required to have Status Determination Criteria and Annual Catch Limits (ACLs); however, there is an International Exception for stocks that are subject to “any bilateral or multilateral treaty, convention, or agreement which relates to fishing and to which the United States is a party.” MUS that are eligible for the International Exception are still required to have Status Determination Criteria, but not ACLs.

There are many factors that are taken into consideration, including the life history characteristics and biology of the stocks, geographic range, quantity and quality of the data available about the stock (e.g., age and size composition of the stock, growth, maturity, and recruitment), how it is distributed, and the fishery in developing and setting the criteria for a stock or group of stocks in an FMP.

PFMC has FMPs for salmon (primarily chinook and coho, and sometimes pink), groundfish (e.g., flatfish—except Pacific halibut—rockfish, whiting or hake, lingcod), coastal pelagic species (e.g., sardine, anchovy, squid), and highly migratory species (e.g., tunas, billfish, pelagic sharks). Each of these FMPs has a different method for assessing the status of the stocks managed under the FMP.

Some stocks have formal peer-reviewed stock assessments, but the majority of the stocks are evaluated using catch information. The stock distribution for some species is captured well by fishery independent surveys and others are reliant on fishery data. In addition to determining the status of the stocks, the MSA also has requirements relative to rebuilding stocks that are determined to be overfished—the implementation of those rebuilding requirements are also included in each FMP.

At the meeting, staff will provide an overview of Status Determination Criteria, the process by which those criteria are applied by the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service, how salmon escapement goals are factored in, and what processes would be used to make adjustments to these criteria.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

None—briefing only.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

None—briefing only. This presentation is in response to a Commission blue sheet request submitted in June 2017.

Action requested:

None—briefing only.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A

Communications Plan:

N/A