

MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CA Fish and Game Commission

Committee Chairs: Commissioner Rogers and Commissioner Sutton

Meeting Summary

April 17, 2012

Center for the Future of the Oceans
Heritage Harbor

99 Pacific Street, Suite 100A. Monterey, CA 93940

Summary of MRC Recommendations:

- Market Squid
 - Discuss with full Commission at its May meeting all options proposed to slow the fishery during peak activity periods, address the 2-ton directed fishery, and clarify regulatory text. Recommend the Commission request the Department to prepare a regulatory package for Commission consideration.
- Forage policy
 - Request stakeholders continue to work together and with Department and Commission staff to further define the details of the policy, coordinate with activities of the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and begin to develop the text of the policy for discussion at the MRC's August meeting.
- Red Abalone
 - Support the Department's proposed approach to phase implementation to long-term management under the ARMP initiating with a split of the fishery into two zones; Mendocino County north and Sonoma County south. The MRC also recommended the Department work with stakeholders to help fill data gaps.
- Items previously before the MRC
 - Recommend staff work with the Department, Al Taucher Committee, and stakeholders to increase report card return rates without additional regulations. The MRC also recommended staff continue to pursue the components of the regulatory package that addressed the need to possess a fishing license in order to purchase a report card for anglers over 16 years of age and develop a fee for the sturgeon report card.
- Support of proposed legislation
 - AB 1776 (Fong) State Government: Pacific leatherback sea turtle
 - AB 1961 (Huffman) Coho salmon: habitat

Meeting Summary

1. Introductions

Commissioners Rogers and Sutton convened the subcommittee meeting with self introductions around the room and an explanation of the ground rules for the meeting.

2. Informational updates

a. California Department of Fish and Game

Marci Yaremko, State/Federal Fisheries Program Manager for the Department provided an update of activities within the Marine Region:

- The Department is in the process of analyzing the merits of the proposals that have been received for the triennial sportfishing cycle and will be providing recommendations for the rules that will be effective March 1, 2013. Items under consideration include, size limit for shortfin corvina, changes to abalone report card format, gooseneck barnacles, gulf and broomtail groupers, bag limits for Dungeness crab, and spearfishing for striped bass.
- The Department is working in conjunction with the Pacific Fishery Management Council to evaluate and quantify survivorship of rockfish released with descender devices. It is anticipated a recommendation will be forthcoming to apply a lower mortality rate for cowcod within the CPFV fleet when fish descenders are employed.
- There has been an increase in the catch of Pacific halibut over the past three to five years as observed on charter boats and through CRFS sampling. The Department is in the process of estimating if catches are exceeding the authorized catch limit of 6,000 lbs under the federal catch sharing plan and will likely be developing recommendations to reduce catch. The Department will be holding a public meeting on May 16, in Eureka to provide an overview of Pacific Halibut management on the west coast, how it relates to California's current fishery, and plans and proposals for informing the assessment process for northern California.
- The salmon fishery opened April 7 and most reports indicate that it is off to a great start. Assessments from opening weekend indicate that an estimated 95% of fish in the fishery were age 3 Sacramento River fall run Chinook which corroborates with the predictions of the Council Technical Team.

b. California Ocean Protection Council

The Commission's Marine Advisor, Dr. Craig Shuman provided an update on recent activities of the Ocean Protection Council (OPC):

- Dungeness Crab Task Force: SB 369 (Evans, 2011) requires the OPC to establish and administer the task force to, among other things, provide input on the proposed trap limit program. The OPC has retained an administrative team, re-established the task force, held two meetings, and will submit task force input on the trap program to DFG by May 1 in order for the Department to get program in place for the 2013/14 season.
- In-stream flow studies on the Shasta, Big Sur, and Santa Maria rivers are proceeding on schedule.

- Collaborative Fisheries Research: LOIs have been reviewed, and full proposals have been invited
- California Voluntary Sustainable Seafood Program: Staff is working with CDFA and conducting research to begin developing the marketing program required under AB 1217 (Monning, 2009).
 - Input by stakeholders highlighted concerns of the fishing communities ability to participate in the program

2. Update: California spiny lobster Fishery Management Plan

Marci Yaremko announced that a contractor and facilitator have been hired and that the Department will be hosting two public meetings in Oxnard and Carlsbad to begin to engage constituents in the process. It was also noted that the nomination process is open for the advisory committee and applications are due by May 11, 2012. The first meeting of the advisory committee will be June 20. More information can be found on the department's spiny lobster FMP website at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/lobsterfmp/>. Input by stakeholders focused on the need to improve scientific capacity and data collection.

3. Discussion: Options to slow the derby nature of the California market squid fishery and clarify regulatory text

Marci Yaremko provided an overview of proposed changes to the market squid fishery regulations to slow catches during peak activity periods to keep the fishery open longer into the season, eliminate the 2-ton directed fishery that is taking place post-closure by modifying the regulatory language regarding incidental catch provisions, and minor changes to text for clarity and consistency. All of the proposed amendments would be consistent with the Market Squid FMP, and fall within its scope.

Proposed options to slow catches during peak fishing activity include:

- Limit vessels to one delivery per calendar day
- Reduce open days of the week from five to four or three
- Daily trip limit per vessel

Mechanisms would only be applied inseason once a percentage of the quota has been attained and only if it appears the quota will be attained early in the season.

Proposed options to change incidental catch provisions include:

- Require possession and landing of a target species once the squid fishery is closed
- Incidental catch would be limited to a maximum of [10-30] percent of the total volume by weight of all fish landed or possessed on a vessel
- Maintain the 2-ton limit

Discussion with stakeholders highlighted concerns from the industry about waste if trip limits are imposed and the general desire to maintain the fishery as it is currently structured. Concerns were also expressed about the overage of the quota by approximately 15% in recent years.

The MRC recommended that all options be forwarded to the Commission for consideration, but expressed concern with proposed options to slow catches during peak fishing activity. The MRC requested the Department discuss this with the full Commission at its May meeting and start any requested rulemakings as soon as possible.

4. Update: Report from interested parties on development of Forage Policy

A series of presentations highlighting the progress to date of stakeholder efforts to come to agreement on the basis for a forage policy as well as coordinate with the Department and efforts at the Pacific Fishery Management Council were given.

Presentations included:

Kaitlin Gaffney – Ocean Conservancy

Geoff Shester – Oceana

Diane Pleschner-Steele – California Wetfish Producers Association

Deb Wilson-Vandenberg – Department of Fish and Game

The MRC expressed its appreciation for the efforts of stakeholders thus far and requested they continue to work with Department and Commission staff to further define the details of the policy, coordinate with activities of the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and begin to develop the text of the policy for discussion at the MRC's August meeting.

5. Discussion: Status of north coast recreational red abalone fishery and proposed modifications

Ian Taniguchi, Department Environmental Scientist provided an update of the Department's efforts to move towards area management and the Abalone Recovery and Management Plan's (ARMP) long term management plan. The update focused on concerns expressed by stakeholders over the effectiveness of current management of the abalone fishery under the ARMP interim management plan, including the validity of the Department's survey data at index sites, the Department's review of abalone management, and a conceptual framework for transition to long-term management. Results of the Department's most recent assessments indicate catch is different in Sonoma and Mendocino counties with the density of abalone showing a significant decline in Sonoma County over the past several years to levels below triggers specified in the ARMP.

Moving forward, the Department proposed a phased approach initiating with a split of the fishery into two zones; Mendocino County north and Sonoma County south. This would be followed by a process to develop options for long-term management and eventual update of the ARMP. Immediate next steps were proposed for the Department to begin to work on splitting the fishery into two zones and work collaboratively with stakeholders to develop a mechanism to reduce catch in Sonoma County south by 25%. Initial outreach is proposed to include a workshop with stakeholders in late summer or early fall to solicit input from constituents and provide more details on the proposed transition.

Discussion focused on stakeholder concerns about appropriateness of triggers and lack of data. The MRC was supportive of the proposed approach and expressed its concern over the lack of resources for expanded data collection, both within the north coast fishery area and south of San Francisco Bay in the fishery moratorium area. The MRC commented that enhanced data collection efforts will be critical to ensure the long-term sustainability of the recreational red abalone fishery. The MRC suggested the Department continue to develop partnerships and to enlist citizen scientists to help fill data gaps.

6. Update and Discussion: Items previously before the MRC

The Commission's Marine Advisor provided an update on items previously before the MRC:

- Report card returns: Staff continue to work on tools to increase compliance with report card returns. Harvest reporting is expected to be available online in the next few months through ALDS and it was recommended that additional punitive approaches to increase report card returns be delayed for at least one year to allow for the public and Department staff to become familiar with the new system. In the interim, staff will work with the Department, members of the AI Taucher Committee and stakeholders to increase report card returns through voluntary measures.

The MRC recommended staff work with all parties to increase return rates without additional regulation and explore the viability of a centralized return program. The MRC also recommended staff continue to pursue the components of the regulatory package that addressed the need to possess a fishing license in order to purchase a report card for anglers over 16 years of age and implement a fee for the sturgeon report card.

- The proposal to the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management for a student project to assist with the review of the Commission's Policy on Restricted Access Fisheries was not accepted. Staff will continue to explore opportunities to obtain additional resources to facilitate a review of the policy.

7. Consideration of MRC support of proposed legislation:

After discussion, the MRC determined to recommend the following proposed bills for Commission support:

- a. AB 1776 (Fong) State Government: Pacific leatherback sea turtle
- b. AB 1961 (Huffman) Coho salmon: habitat

The MRC requested staff to continue track AB 2267 (Hall) for future consideration and discussed the value of proactively providing statements related to the support, or opposition, to management concepts as opposed to specific legislation.

8. Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.