

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

State rules governing fisheries for Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS), including Pacific sardine, Pacific mackerel, jack mackerel, northern anchovy, market squid, and krill are based on rules adopted federally. The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) conducts a significant public process when determining harvest limits and regulatory recommendations, which are considered and implemented (occasionally with adjustments) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

For these fisheries, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) incorporates federal regulations annually as the basis for regulations adopted through the state process for state waters (inside three miles). The state has the latitude to adopt concurrent or more conservative regulations, but not more liberal.

One issue is set forth here for the Commission to consider: adoption of federal harvest specifications and regulations for the Pacific sardine fishery for the July 2018 through June 2019 fishing period. These harvest specifications include incidental landings allowances in other fisheries.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A significant public process was conducted by the Council in development of the federal harvest regulations for the commercial fisheries for Pacific sardine.

ISSUE 1

FEDERAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR COMMERCIAL COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES FISHERIES

ANALYSIS

Under the Council's CPS Fishery Management Plan (FMP), CPS are classified under three management categories: 1) Pacific sardine and Pacific mackerel are actively managed stocks; 2) jack mackerel, market squid and two subpopulations of northern anchovy are monitored stocks; and 3) all species of krill (euphausiids) are prohibited stocks. Harvest and management measures are specified annually for each actively managed stock, and on a multi-year basis for monitored stocks. Coastwide (WA/OR/CA), all species except jack mackerel and krill are subject to active directed commercial fisheries. In Oregon, CPS fisheries primarily target and harvest Pacific sardine, although targeting and harvest of market squid, northern anchovy, and Pacific mackerel have occurred, especially in recent years.

For the 2018-2019 coastwide Pacific sardine fishery, the Council recommended at its April 2018 meeting that no harvest be allowed by the primary directed non-tribal commercial fishery (Attachment 4, page 2). This decision continues the closure begun July 1, 2015 for the fishery on the west coast (Figure 1). For comparison, the harvest allocated for the 2014-2015 season non-tribal directed sardine fishery was set at 17,793 metric tons (mt). Although directed non-tribal harvest was not allowed

during 2015-2018, US harvest limits were set at very low levels to allow for incidental, tribal, and other small harvest activities to continue (as described below).

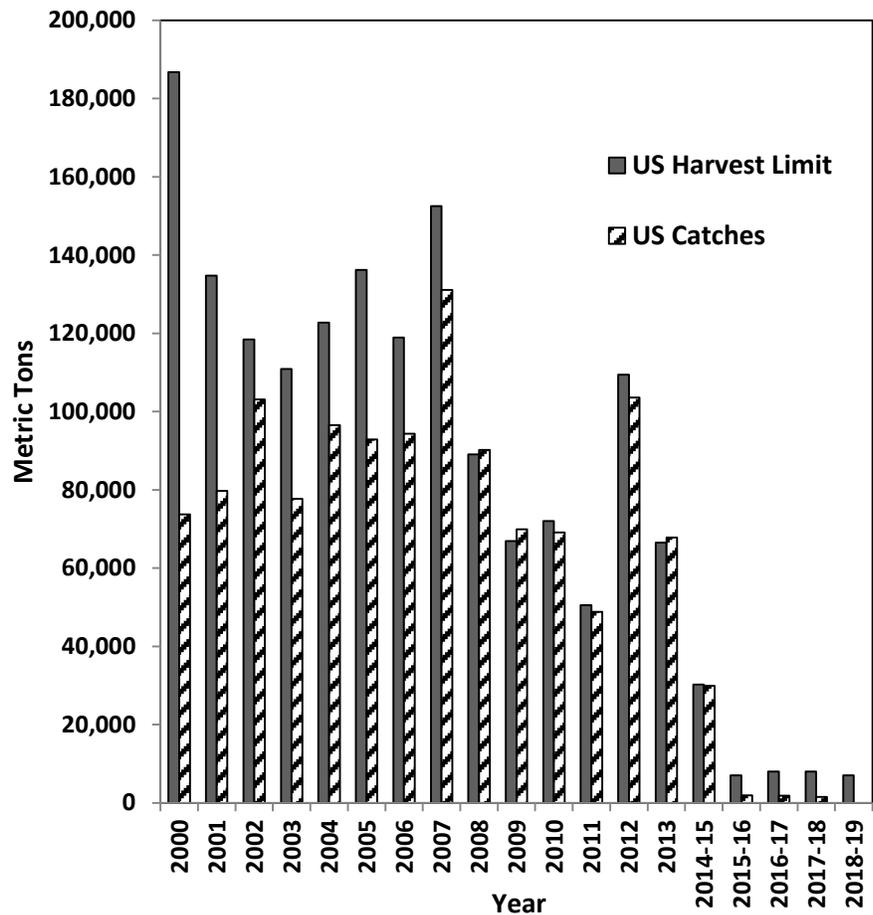


Figure 1. Annual US harvest limits and total catches for Pacific sardine since the implementation of federal management. The value for the 2018-19 fishery was approved by the Pacific Fishery Management Council in April.

The large decline in allowable harvest is due to continued observed declines in sardine biomass estimated by a model using fishery and survey data. The abundance of eggs, larvae, and young fish observed in surveys has been very low for the past several years. The population trajectory estimated by the model shows the population declining each year since peaking in 2006 (Figure 2).

The fishable population estimate must be above 150,000 mt (CUTOFF) in order to allow directed commercial fishing, other than tribal or small scale fisheries. For 2018, the fishable population estimate is 52,065 mt, smaller than the 150,000 mt CUTOFF level specified under the CPS FMP to protect the spawning population. The fishable population estimate for 2018 is only slightly above 50,000 mt, which is the minimum stock size threshold (MSST) or the biomass below which the sardine population is defined as overfished (Figure 2).

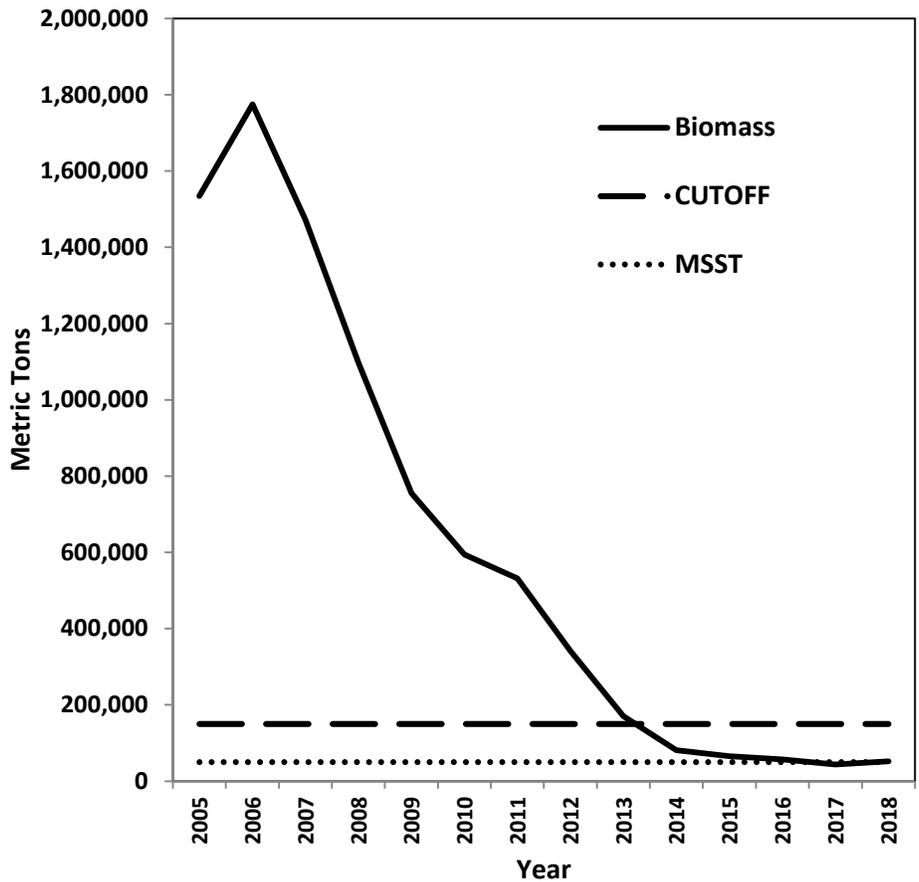


Figure 2. Sardine population trajectory (biomass, ages 1+) estimated by the 2018 assessment in metric tons (mt). The dashed horizontal line represents the level below which non-tribal directed commercial fishing is not allowed (CUTOFF). The solid horizontal line at the bottom indicates the level at which the stock is defined as overfished (MSST).

Although a commercial directed fishery is not allowed, the Council provided for limited harvests of sardines in other fisheries (Figure 1). The Council adopted a limit of 7,000 mt for all harvests of sardines on the west coast, including tribal fisheries, small scale fisheries, incidental harvests in other commercial fisheries, and a live bait fishery, plus small recreational fisheries and research. The Council also approved 5,010 mt for research activities under two exempted fishery permits. Federal regulations are anticipated to be adopted that implement the Council’s recommendations (Attachment 5).

The Council adopted the following automatic in-season actions for non-tribal CPS fisheries:

- An incidental per landing allowance of 40 percent Pacific sardine (by weight) until a total of 2,500 mt of Pacific sardine are landed.
- When the 2,500 mt is achieved, the incidental per landing allowance would be reduced to 20 percent for the remainder of the 2018-2019 fishing year.

In addition, the Council adopted a 2 mt incidental per landing allowance in non-CPS fisheries for the 2018-2019 fishing year.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt concurrent rules for Coastal Pelagic Species fisheries as shown in Attachment 3.
2. Adopt more conservative measures.

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

Option 1

DRAFT MOTION	I move to adopt the staff recommended rules for Coastal Pelagic Species fisheries as proposed in Attachment 3, including the appropriate citations to the federal regulation, when available.
EFFECTIVE DATE	Upon filing