

## **MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

### **CA Fish and Game Commission**

Committee Chairs: Commissioner Rogers and Commissioner Sutton

#### **Meeting Summary**

February 15, 2011

Center for the Future of the Oceans  
Heritage Harbor  
99 Pacific Street, Suite 100A. Monterey, CA 93940

#### 1. Informational updates

##### a. California Department of Fish and Game

Marine Region Manager Marija Vojkovich reported on several projects within the Marine Region that relate to the MRC. The Marine Region is in the planning stages of a workshop to bring researchers and managers together to further the discussion of the relationship between MPAs and fisheries management. The workshop, anticipated to take place at the end of March, will broadly address all aspects of the topic and will be an opportunity to start addressing the numerous questions on this issue and get expert advice.

Settlement funds from the Cusco Buson oil spill to further research on the herring fishery in San Francisco Bay have not yet arrived, but are expected shortly. The department will present a report at the Fisheries Forum highlighting that herring is showing a comeback and that spawning events are taking place in the Bay.

This has been a very good year for many fisheries and the rebuilding of stocks. Squid had a banner year, likely driven by environmental conditions, and the fishery was closed in December after reaching the quota outlined in the Squid Fishery Management Plan. Lingcod are totally rebuilt and the department hopes to expand fishing opportunities. Dungeness crab and lobster fisheries appear to be operating in a sustainable manner and are not demonstrating any major red flags.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is starting the salmon management process. Initial information continues to be positive with chinook runs in the Sacramento and Klamath rivers appearing to be at levels that meet conservation objectives. The council will be meeting in March and early April to review the data and refine options for different fisheries sectors. This will be followed by a teleconference by the commission scheduled for April 21 to discuss and possibly adopt changes to salmon fishing regulations.

##### b. California Ocean Protection Council

OPC Executive Director Amber Mace updated the MRC on several OPC projects that relate to the MRC. The draft protocol developed under AB 1217, Sustainable Seafood Initiative was released for public review. Over 2500 comments have been received and a final recommendation is expected to be presented to the OPC at the May meeting.

The central cost groundfish project continues to make progress with its trawl impact and recovery study. This collaborative project has completed its first year and will be summarizing results in a forthcoming report. The project is preparing to commence its second year of additional research.

The aquaculture Programmatic Environmental Impact Report is close to wrapping up. This document will serve as the first tier of CEQA review and a guidance document for potential project sponsors. Peer review comments are anticipated by mid March.

The RFP for the South Coast MPA Baseline Program was recently released. Using OPC authorized funds of up to \$4 million, the RFP is soliciting proposals that contribute to meeting the purposes of the Baseline Program which are to:

- Provide a summary description, assessment and understanding of ecological and socioeconomic conditions in the South Coast region, inside and outside MPAs designated under the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), at or near the time of MPA implementation; and
- Measure initial ecological changes and the short-run net benefits or costs to consumptive and non-consumptive user groups following MPA implementation.

The next OPC meeting will be March 11, 2011 at the CalEPA building in Sacramento. This will be the first meeting for new OPC members, Secretary of Natural Resources John Laird, Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom and State Assemblymember Toni Atkins.

## 2. Update: Items previously before the MRC

The department is working on a memo requesting the commission designate Kellet's whelk as an emerging fishery. It is anticipated that this memo will be presented to the commission at its April meeting.

Department staff are incorporating comments from the last MRC meeting into a revised ISOR for possible changes to the north coast recreational abalone fishery. Among the options that will be presented to the commission for consideration will be the start of fishing at a later hour and an early season closure at Fort Ross. Due to time constraints and desire to avoid a mid-season change, the goal is to have the possible changes ready for the start of the 2012 season. The anticipated timeline is to have a notice hearing in June, discussion in August, and possible adoption at the commission's September meeting. Many of these meetings are in the northern California area, making them more accessible for stakeholders to provide input.

Work is continuing on the development of a mechanism to increase compliance with report card returns. The developing Automated License Data System (ALDS) will allow for the tracking of report card returns and link report cards to individuals through their fishing license number. As the system continues to evolve and a system is in place to track returns, it may be necessary to explore regulatory changes to standardize penalties for non-compliance with return rules to help increase return rates.

The Marine Region is taking a closer look at the analyses presented at the October 2010 MRC meeting pertaining to sand and kelp bass. There are some concerns about how time series of data were treated during the switch from MRFS to CRFS as it has proven difficult to calibrate

the different methodologies. The department is working with the report authors to explore alternate evaluation methods. The department is also pursuing additional studies on growth, fecundity, spawning frequency and spawning-per-recruit to evaluate the efficacy of existing regulations and assess the need for regulatory change. It is anticipated that this additional work will be completed in 12 – 18 months.

The department has been experiencing difficulties finalizing the contract to complete the supplemental modeling to assess the risk of a possible commercial abalone fishery at San Miguel Island. The department is hopeful that a solution has been found and is currently working on final language.

### 3. Presentation: Monterey Bay Halibut Research Design Project

Dick Ely provided an update of the Monterey Bay Halibut Research Design Project. Convened by Assemblymember Monning, a sustainable fishing group of 24 individuals has been meeting on a regular basis to evaluate the potential socio-economic and marine ecosystem impacts of trawl based and hook and line based commercial fishing for California halibut in State waters of Monterey Bay. The group is comprised of a mix of academic scientists, fisheries managers, fishermen, NGOs, and port representatives.

The group is focused on four alternative research approaches related to the biological and socioeconomic advantages and disadvantages of hook and line, historic trawl, light trawl, and longline gear types. The group is currently exploring funding options and permitting needs, and will keep the MRC updated on its progress.

### 4. Discussion: Filleting of fish on vessels – leopard sharks

Warden Sheree Christensen discussed a conflict between the California Fish and Game Code and regulations in Title 14 California Code of Regulations pertaining to the ability of anglers to filet fish at sea. Initially revealed for leopard shark, further research indicated that this discrepancy also applies to sheephead and redbtail surfperch, all species that have a size limit specified in Title 14 but do not have a filet size specified nor are listed as species that cannot be filleted at sea in Section 27.65(c), Title 14, CCR. Following a discussion on various regulatory options the MRC recommended that Law Enforcement Division develop a regulatory package to amend Section 27.65, Title 14, CCR to include language that prohibits the filleting of species that have size limits that are not listed in Section 27.65(b)

### 5. Discussion: Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan – Sustainable Fisheries Focal Area

OPC Executive Director Amber Mace discussed the process for the development of the OPC Strategic Plan. This includes five focal areas, one of which is Sustainable Fisheries. The process is intended to work through the larger issues with agency partners and align priorities for future work. The background analysis will continue through the next year and will be used to inform the development of an action plan.

### 6. Presentation: Collaborative Fisheries Research Organization

Collaborative Fisheries Research West Executive Director Peter Nelson described the development of the Collaborative Fisheries Research West program. Funded through OPC, this program is working to engage partnerships among fishermen, managers and scientists to provide excellent science in the service of fisheries management. Headquartered in Santa Cruz, the program has formed an Executive Board, completed a 12 month work plan and is

evaluating an initial portfolio of research projects. The next steps for the project are, among other things, to form an Advisory Committee, fund an initial set of “poster project(s)”, and explore long-term funding strategies. The program is also working to address anticipated challenges related to integration of data into management programs, permitting, and viable models of collaborative fisheries research.

#### 7. Presentation and Discussion: Forage species

A panel of speakers presented on issues related to the management of forage species. The panel included:

- Don Croll, University of California Santa Cruz
- Jon Field, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Fisheries Science Center
- Tom Barnes, DFG Marine Region
- Geoff Shester, Oceana
- Diane Pleschner-Steele, California Wetfish Producers Association

The presentations and ensuing discussion addressed a variety of issues including: the importance of forage species in marine ecosystems; the history of management of forage species in the California Current including the growing emphasis on the interactions between fisheries, climate and the food web; the initiation of a formal evaluation of options by the Pacific Fishery Management Council for an Ecosystem Plan that will provide a framework for improving understanding of ecosystem functions and fisheries interactions within the California Current Ecosystem; current practices by the department to integrate forage with existing management programs; the need to incorporate forage needs explicitly into the management of species and identify key habitats and protect the health of food webs; and efforts by coastal pelagic species fisheries to sustainably manage and monitor their fisheries.

The MRC recognized the importance of proactive management of forage species and will track the development of the council’s Ecosystem Plan to assess how the management components can be applied to state managed species. The MRC was also supportive of the idea of a workshop to help develop tools and make recommendations on a possible state policy on forage species, but was concerned by the lack of staffing and resources to undertake a project of this nature at this time.