

MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CA Fish and Game Commission

Committee Chairs: Commissioner Rogers and Commissioner Sutton

Meeting Summary

January 18, 2012

Harbor Classroom
125 Harbor Way, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Second floor of Marine Center Building

Summary of MRC Recommendations:

Southern California Basses [*Paralabrax* sp. - kelp bass, barred sand bass, spotted sand bass]

- Request the Department to develop a regulatory package for Commission consideration that contains the following options:
 - Increase size limit (notice range, 12 – 15 inches)
 - Individual species bag limit (notice range, 0 – 10)
 - Seasonal closure for barred sand bass (notice range, June 1 – August 31)
 - Additional items to evaluate and include as options as appropriate
 - Area closure for barred sand bass
 - Slot limit

1. Informational updates

a. California Department of Fish and Game

Katie Perry, Marine Region Program Manager for Resource Assessment, reported on several updates within Marine Region that relate to the MRC:

- The hiring freeze has been lifted and the Department is actively working to fill vacant positions within Marine Region.
- The central coast Dungeness crab season opened on November 15, following a delay due to a price dispute, and the northern fishery opened on January 15. The northern fishery is reporting an average season and the central fishery is reporting a better than average season. The Department is working with partners to develop a trap limit program for the Dungeness crab fishery pursuant to SB 369 (Evans, 2011).
- The herring fishery opened on January 2, 2012 with the Even Platoon fishing toward the quota of 913 tons. The Odd Platoon will begin fishing their quota of 932 tons in the fourth week of January, or sooner, if the Even Platoon reaches their quota. There has been no fishing effort this season for the Herring-Eggs-on-Kelp fishery. To date only a few large herring spawns have been encountered in San Francisco Bay by Department biologists and commercial fishermen assisting them. The low number of large spawns is most

likely due to the lack of rain in December and early January, as herring spawns are often triggered by rain events.

- The Department is currently working with other state and federal agencies to set the 2012 ocean salmon season. Preliminary data for both Klamath and Sacramento fall run Chinook for 2011 suggest good returns; however, 2012 fishing opportunities cannot be anticipated until the federal Biological Opinion on Winter-run Chinook is made available. More information will be made available at the annual salmon informational meeting on February 28 in Santa Rosa.
- The Department is conducting a survey of swordfish constituents to assist with the long-term planning and interest in exploring changes to the fishery.

b. California Ocean Protection Council

The Commission's Marine Advisor, Craig Shuman, conveyed an update of OPC activities. The Ocean Protection Council convened on December 16, 2011 in Sacramento. The Council discussed extreme climate events, adopted a California voluntary sustainable seafood program protocol, recommended policy on marine renewable energy test and pilot projects, supported integration of California's coastal and marine geospatial data into a statewide geo-portal, and concurred with selected research projects to inform management.

The California Voluntary Sustainable Seafood Program protocol, developed per the requirements of AB 1217 (Monning, 2009) is based on the Marine Stewardship Council certification system (www.msc.org) and incorporates stricter standards on selected performance indicators, additional scientific review, and additional traceability and consumer information. The next steps for the protocol will involve voluntary pre-assessments and the development of a logo and tracking system.

The Council concurred with the proposed research awards for the 2011 University of California and University of Southern California Sea Grant Programs for the following projects:

- Integrating MLMA and MLPA – Developing new ways to manage California's nearshore fisheries using catch data from MPA monitoring
- Ecosystem Impacts of kelp forest habitat restoration, including important fishery species
- Will a warmer, more acidic ocean lead to increased Pseudo-nitzschia bloom toxicity in the southern California Bight?
- The value of habitat diversity in Marine Reserves: spiny lobster and sheephead use of the intertidal zone of the Santa Catalina Island MPA

The revised draft strategic plan was released on December 15, 2011 and comments were accepted through January 16, 2012. It is anticipated that the Council will consider the final plan at its meeting on February 17, 2012.

2. Update: Spiny lobster FMP

Kristine Barsky, Department coordinator for the spiny lobster FMP provided an update on the development of the FMP:

- The draft stock assessment indicates the stock is currently stable, although there are some areas of concern. The stock assessment and technical report is now available on the FMP webpage (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/lobsterfmp/>).
- The Department has set up a listserv to keep interested parties informed and already has over 200 members on the list. The link to sign up for email notifications of FMP activities is available on the website above.
- The Department received almost \$1 million from OPC to help fund external contracts to support the development of the FMP. The proposal period for the fishery overview, fishery management and conservation, and fishery research protocol chapters has closed. The proposal period is currently open for facilitation for public and advisory committee meetings and it is anticipated that a request for qualifications will be posted in late January for the management strategy evaluation.
- The team is working on an announcement to solicit volunteers for the lobster advisory committee. Anybody can apply by completing an application.
- The first public scoping sessions will be held on April 18 and 19 in Ventura and Orange counties to describe the components of a FMP, lay out the multi-year plan, solicit input, and make a final call for the advisory group.
- It is anticipated that the advisory committee will be selected in May and the first committee meeting will be in June

Discussion focused on development of the FMP, the use of report card data, how poaching will be accounted for in the FMP, and coordination with the spiny lobster fishery in Mexico that is already certified to MSC standards.

3. Update: Items referred to the MRC

The Commission's Marine Advisor, Craig Shuman, provided an update on items that have previously been referred to the MRC. Staff is working on a regulatory package for mandatory return of abalone report cards and expects it will be ready for commission consideration by late spring or early summer. Staff will also begin developing an abalone educational video during that time frame to help teach and encourage responsible abalone harvesting techniques. Staff is working on a proposal for a group project with the Bren School to help facilitate a comprehensive review of the Commission's Policy on Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries and is engaging in continued discussions with the Department and the California Abalone Marketing Association regarding a possible experimental fishery for red abalone at San Miguel Island. Other items that staff will be queuing up for future MRC meetings include the development of a forage policy, and modifications to the market squid fishery to slow the derby nature of the fishery and clarify the regulatory text.

4. Discussion: Fishery analysis of the basses of southern California (*Paralabrax sp.*) and possible management options

Marine Region Environmental Scientist, Erica Jarvis, provided a [comprehensive overview on the basses of southern California and possible management options](#). The presentation focused on changes in the populations of the three bass species in response to climatic conditions, outreach conducted by the Department with stakeholders, and possible management measures to mitigate fishing effects during time of suboptimal environmental conditions. The recommendations included some combination of an increase in the size limit, a decrease in the bag limit for the individual species, and a seasonal closure for barred sand bass to protect spawning aggregations.

Discussion with the MRC and stakeholders focused on the importance of these fisheries to the CPFV (party boat) fleet and private anglers, concerns about barotrauma and post-release mortality, catch and release, slot limits, and gear restrictions. The MRC agreed to recommend that the full Commission request the Department to move forward with options for an increased size limit, decreased bag limit, seasonal closure for barred sand bass, and also to explore area closures for barred sand bass and slot limits for all species.

5. Informational Presentation: Harmful algal blooms and marine biotoxin monitoring program

Informational presentations were given on the topics of harmful algal blooms and the reauthorization of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act (HABHRCA) by Dr. Raphael Kudela, professor of ocean sciences at University of California, Santa Cruz and on the marine biotoxin monitoring program by Gregg Langlois, Senior Environmental Scientist with the California Department of Public Health and manager of the marine biotoxin program.

6. Meeting Adjourned at 5:30 pm