

**Managing
Our Nation's
Fisheries 3**
Advancing Sustainability



The Pacific Fishery Management Council

Located in Portland, Oregon
Jurisdiction: EEZ off Washington,
Oregon & California
(317,690 square miles)
Manages 119+ species under four
fishery management plans
Council has 14 voting members
and 14 permanent advisory bodies



Transformation of the groundfish fishery

A successful catch share program

When the Council was formed in 1976, few fisheries off the West Coast were actively managed. Only the groundfish fishery and the salmon fishery, which was first managed in the 1870s, were subject to extensive management.

Before 1976, foreign vessels trawled for groundfish extensively just outside the 12 mile limit off Washington, Oregon and California, and the West Coast groundfish fleet was small and underdeveloped. A large fleet of small trollers fished for salmon, albacore and crab, which were managed by their respective states. With the passage of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) in 1976, the U.S. extended its jurisdiction to 200 miles. The MSA transformed the face of fishing on the West Coast.

After the passage of the MSA, the foreign trawl fishery off the West Coast was first integrated into the growing domestic fishery through joint-venture operations, and then fully replaced by the domestic fishery. At the same time, unbeknownst to scientists and managers, groundfish stocks declined due to overfishing and a lack of data about fishing impacts.

In response to refinements in the MSA, better scientific information, innovative strategies, and other factors, the Council's groundfish fishery management plan, first put in place in 1982, has been amended 28 times. The 1996 reauthorization required identification of essential fish habitat, and measures to reduce bycatch, prevent overfishing, and rebuild overfished stocks. However, as time went on, all of these regulations became more burdensome, both to fishermen and managers. Derby fisheries developed, and it was hard for fishermen to plan for the future. At the same time, nine stocks were declared overfished, and stringent rebuilding plans were put in place. Rebuilding times were revised and refined in response to litigation. Nevertheless, overfishing had ceased and all stocks were either rebuilt or are rebuilding.

In 2011, after seven years of development, a rationalization (or catch share) program replaced the previous tangle of rules in the groundfish trawl fishery. Before, most groundfish were managed with two-month cumulative limits and whiting was managed as a derby. Now, fishermen can fish at their own pace, because no one else is allowed to catch their quota. This leads to safer fisheries, better markets, and smoother business planning. In addition, fishermen must account for all species they bring aboard their vessel. Their entire catch, not just landings, is deducted from their annual quota. There is 100% at-sea monitoring of catches, currently conducted by trained observers. As a result, fishermen work to ensure they are catching their targeted stocks and avoiding the overfished species that have tiny quotas.

Results from the first year of the catch share program show that revenues are up, bycatch is down, and fishing for whiting is extended over a longer season. Program-wide, bycatch was down to 5% in the nonwhiting fishery and less than 1% in the whiting fishery. In the whiting fleet, for example, bycatch of canary rockfish was reduced by 79 percent, and Pacific Ocean perch was reduced 96 percent. The program is one of the most transformative strategies in fishery management history.

The West Coast *salmon fishery* present a unique management challenge. As anadromous fish, salmon are affected by both ocean and freshwater conditions. This means that salmon are sub-





ject to a wide variety of impacts including climate change, habitat loss, urbanization and its accompanying menaces, dams that block migration, agricultural runoff, timber management practices, predation, commercial and recreational harvest, and hatchery practices. It also means they are subject to the varying actions of multiple local, state, regional, and Federal agencies.

Salmon are a vital symbol for both traditional and modern native cultures. Their symbolic and economic importance continues today along the West Coast, with millions of dollars being spent to improve degraded habitat and recover depressed salmon runs. At the same time, the commercial and recreational salmon fisheries generate millions of dollars for communities along the West Coast.



In 1888, the first limitation on salmon harvest was put into effect in Oregon in the face of massive overexploitation of the stock. Beginning in the 1930s, a series of dams were built on mainstem rivers throughout the West. These dams blocked access to thousands of miles of important spawning habitat for salmon. In 1957, the Dalles Dam inundated Celilo Falls on the Columbia River, which had been a vital meeting and fishing ground used by native Americans for at least 10,000 years.

Awareness of the decline in salmon stocks helped lead to conservation measures beginning in the 1970s. However, many of these laws came too late. In the 1990s, several salmon runs were listed as threatened and endangered.

The Council's first salmon plan was issued to govern the 1977 salmon season. Since then, the plan has been revised and amended 14 times, primarily to define spawning goals, establish harvest controls, deal with allocation issues, designate essential fish habitat, and address the Endangered Species Act, bycatch issues, and requirements of National Standard 1 guidelines.

The Council's *highly migratory species fishery* requires intensive international coordination.

Highly migratory species are transboundary stocks, so management requires the Council to participate in international management forums including the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. North Pacific albacore and swordfish are the Council's most valuable highly migratory species fisheries. Since 2000, U.S. vessels accounted for 20% of the North Pacific albacore catch, with Japan accounting for 72%.



A treaty between the U.S. and Canada allows commercial vessels from each country to access the other's waters in order to catch albacore. However, frustration by U.S. fishermen over conditions on the fishing grounds lead to a break in reciprocal access in 2012. The U.S. and Canada are currently negotiating a deal for access to each others' zones for 2013, and the Pacific Council is an important forum for public input about the treaty.

Ecosystem-based management in action

The Council's *coastal pelagic species* fishery management plan and *Fishery Ecosystem Plan* reflect the Council's growing focus on ecosystem management. The coastal pelagic species fishery management plan includes sardines, anchovies, mackerel, and market squid, which are managed as directed fisheries with conservative harvest rates. The plan also includes krill, which was added in 2006 explicitly to prevent a krill fishery from developing, given the importance of krill in the ocean food web.

As a long-term measure, the Council is developing a new Fishery Ecosystem Plan that will enhance the Council's species-specific management programs with more ecosystem science, broader ecosystem considerations, and management policies that coordinate management across its Fishery Management Plans and the California Current Ecosystem. The Council is scheduled to adopt the final plan at its April 6-11, 2013 meeting in Portland, Oregon. As one of the first actions under the FEP, the Council is scheduled to follow through with its June, 2012 announced intent to protect currently unmanaged forage fish by prohibiting the development of new fisheries on these fish. Among other issues, there is concern that increasing demand for aquaculture feeds could lead to new fisheries for these species.