

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2025 PACIFIC WHITING FISHERY UNDER THE U.S./CANADA AGREEMENT AND 2025 FISHERY

Pacific whiting is a transboundary species, which is jointly managed by Canada and the United States through the [Pacific Hake/Whiting Treaty](#) (Treaty). Under this agreement, Canada has a right to 26.12 percent of the overall total allowable catch (TAC) and the United States has a right to 73.88 percent. The treaty process, in brief, initiates with an annual assessment of the Pacific whiting resource by a [Joint Technical Committee](#), which is completed by January. The assessment is reviewed by the [Scientific Review Group](#) in February or March. A [Joint Management Committee](#) (JMC) and [Advisory Panel \(AP\)](#), consisting of U.S. and Canadian government and industry representatives, meets shortly thereafter to review the assessment and provide advice to their respective governments.

The JMC/AP will meet March 11-13 to formalize their recommendations on the 2025 coastwide (U.S. and Canada combined) TAC for Pacific whiting. In most years, the JMC/AP meet before the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting where this item is on the agenda, which allowed the Council to provide an informed recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce regarding the recommended TAC. As the JMC/AP meeting overlaps the March Council meeting this year, the outcomes of that process will not be available for the Council to consider at this meeting. Thus, the Council will not be able to provide formal guidance to the Secretary of Commerce for the 2025 TAC. The Council should consider making a formal statement that it does not intend to comment on the 2025 JMC recommendations due to the timing of that JMC/AP meeting for the record. Noting that the JMC/AP meeting dates hamper Council guidance, the Council could consider providing recommendations to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in on future JMC/AP meeting dates so they occur before Council meetings to allow for their recommendations.

At-sea set-asides are designed to account for assumed non-target groundfish mortality in the at-sea mothership and catcher-processor sectors. In recent years, set-asides for several groundfish species (e.g., shortspine thornyhead, darkblotched rockfish, etc.) have been exceeded. The Council was informed of the overages by the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) in each case; however, as annual catch limits for these species were not likely to be exceeded due to the overages, the Council did not adopt any accountability measures in those instances. However, in response to darkblotched rockfish overages and higher than expected Chinook salmon bycatch in 2023, the Council requested ([H.8.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, June 2023](#)) information from Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative ([Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 3, September 2023](#)) and the Whiting Mothership Cooperative ([Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 2, September 2023](#)) plans for managing salmon bycatch and the groundfish species managed with at-sea set-asides for the remainder of 2023 and 2024. In 2024, the at-sea sectors again exceeded shortspine thornyhead at-sea set-aside ([Agenda Item I.6.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, November 2024](#)), which prompted the Council to request more information on their regulatory authority in relation to at-sea set-asides. This agenda item provides the opportunity for the Council to review the current regulatory language governing set-asides, assess the criteria for invoking inseason action, and clarify their expectations for the 2025 fishery (Attachment 1).

Council Tasks:

1. **Discuss implementation of the 2025 Pacific whiting fishery;**
2. **Provide guidance to NMFS regarding the 2025 Pacific whiting TAC, as appropriate;**
3. **Discuss the Council’s expectation for 2025 Pacific whiting fishery, including at-sea set-aside management, as appropriate.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.3, Attachment: At-sea Whiting Set-Aside Management.
2. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- H.3 Implementation of the 2025 Pacific Whiting Fishery Under the U.S./Canada Agreement and 2025 Fishery Todd Phillips
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Consider Necessary Actions for Implementing the 2025 Pacific Whiting Fishery, Discuss 2025 Fishery Expectations

PFMC
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