



## CALIFORNIA WETFISH PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

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### COUNCIL ACTION TAKES SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO ANCHOVY MANAGEMENT

On Sunday November 15, the Pacific Fishery Management Council received a presentation from the Southwest Fishery Science Center, stating that recent year field surveys, particularly in 2015, have documented record abundance of eggs and juvenile anchovies along the entire west coast. The Center also signaled their intent to conduct a stock assessment in 2016, preceded by a scientific workshop to determine the best method to assess anchovy fluctuations, as recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The management team and advisory subpanel supported this stepwise scientific approach, noting that even though anchovy landings ticked upward in 2015, the small fishery in Monterey was well below harvest limits, and recent surveys signaling significant new recruitment were optimistic signs of increased abundance.

Environmental activists, while pleased with news of the upcoming stock assessment, pleaded for the Council to establish interim measures in the meantime, using the “point of concern” framework built into the CPS management plan to reduce the harvest limit, which would likely close the fishery until the stock assessment was completed. Public testimony concluded with statements from several fishermen from Monterey and southern California, along with two spotter pilots, who testified to the amazing abundance of anchovy they have witnessed in recent years. In addition to Monterey fishermen who have fished anchovies for 50 years, Corbin Hanson, a southern California fisherman who saw literally miles of anchovies along the central coast when he drove his vessel from southern California to Monterey this summer, testified: “Anchovies are probably the most abundant fish in our waters! I spend the majority of my time fishing these waters and can testify to this fact.”

The Council deliberated on the anchovy issue on Monday morning, November 16. They ultimately decided to proceed with the stepwise approach supported by the management team, advisory subpanel and the SSC. This will assure that recent year data will be incorporated into the stock assessment. The Council also asked the CPS management team to analyze various options for active management.

This analysis will require significant work, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife will need to age the backlog of anchovy samples in time for the workshop next spring. However, this scientific approach is the best approach to quantify the current abundance of anchovy, and will lead to a new assessment that will benefit both the ecosystem and the fishing community. California anchovy fishermen and processors appreciate the consideration that Council members gave to fishermen's testimony. "Even though landings are small, the anchovy fishery is very important to Monterey's wetfish industry," says Diane Pleschner-Steele, executive director of the non-profit California Wetfish Producers Association. "We all thank the Council for using science, not politics, in its decision. Council members recognized that a sound management decision requires that all evidence of recent anchovy recruitment be considered."

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