



Meeting Summary

Market Squid Advisory Panel

November 23, 2021, 2:00-4:00 pm

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) convened the second meeting of the Market Squid Advisory Panel (MSAP) members on November 23, 2021. Nine of ten MSAP members attended, along with ODFW and Oregon State Police (OSP) staff, and members of the public. ODFW described development of preliminary staff recommendations for rule making at the February 2022 meeting of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) which included:

- Adopting January 1, 2022, as the control date for participation in the market squid seine fishery for potential development of a future limited entry permit system.
- Strengthening rib line regulations to ensure nets cannot be pursed any less than 36 inches above the lead line
- Prohibiting steel cable purse lines
- Not requiring a vessel monitoring system for squid fishing vessels

Members asked clarifying questions, and ODFW asked for and received recommendations on specific aspects of rule language to ensure the intent would be met. These issues were not discussed further since the MSAP had reached consensus on them during the first meeting.

Net Size Limitations

ODFW opened additional discussion on net length and depth restrictions because MSAP had not reached resolution on this topic during the previous meeting. Members asked questions about and described the pros and cons of net size restrictions. Input on regulating net size was initially mixed. Advocates for net depth restrictions were concerned that fishing in deeper waters would negatively impact fishery sustainability by removing squid before they reach shallower spawning grounds and reducing egg escapement. Others felt that regulations should not be considered unless there was a demonstrated, science-based resource issue and expressed concerns about needing to have a different net for each state they fish in. Members pointed out that most other West Coast seine fisheries have net size restrictions, except the California market squid fishery. The point that longer nets can be bent around crab pots when setting, therefore reducing interactions, was revisited.

After robust discussion of these issues, members ultimately reached unanimous support for capping net size around the largest sizes used in Oregon to date. Further discussion clarified the specifics of a maximum net size proposal which included:

- No more than 300 fathoms long
- No more than 2600 meshes (or 13 "strips" at 200 meshes wide) deep in the body of the net
- Specification of a maximum mesh size (1.5 or 1.75 inches) so that depth limit is enforceable
- Allowance for 25 mesh chaffing strip and 25 mesh cork line strip in addition to the net body

ODFW wrapped up discussion by indicating that staff would consider recommending a maximum net size to the Commission at the February meeting. ODFW then moved into several topics that were not for Commission action in February, but that MSAP members had raised for discussion.

Closed Area Boundaries

ODFW described the issue of drifting into a closed area while nets are still in the water, which is illegal in Oregon under the current definition of "take". MSAP members wanted to discuss this issue because they felt that if the net is already pursed before crossing the boundary, no squid or bycatch is being removed from the closed area, rather catch that was taken outside the boundary is being pumped onboard while the catching vessel is in the closed area. Concerns were raised that forcing a vessel to open a pursed net if it drifts across a boundary would create wastage as there would be a high mortality rate for squid that had been entrained in the net. The group discussed similar rules in other states, which only require that purse rings are brought together and /or handed off from the skiff to the main catching vessel before drifting into a closed area. Some members suggested that fishers could be asked to provide video or photo evidence that the net was pursed before crossing a boundary. OSP provided input on the enforceability of various proposals, indicating that it would be clear when purse lines were handed off if they were observing the activity. ODFW and OSP pointed out that closed areas such as Marine Reserves have a high profile among the public and are closely watched, and it would be difficult to follow up on complaints about squid vessels in reserves if OSP wasn't present to observe a purse line hand off or other indicator of compliance. ODFW wrapped discussion up by recognizing the thought that had been put into addressing the issue by members and stating that any rule changes would involve additional ODFW programs and leadership since closed areas have a high public profile and are not exclusively a squid fishery management issue.

Light Boats

ODFW reviewed input from the MSAP members as well as other fishery participants about the use of independent light boats in the fishery. Staff recognized that it is a sensitive issue for participants due to the relationships between catcher vessels and light boats and reviewed a range of potential management measures that have been raised by participants such as limitations on participation, and light configuration. Some members spoke strongly in favor of continued use of light boats while others preferred a complete prohibition. A significant portion of the discussion focused on whether the catch rate efficiency provided by light boats is necessary in the Oregon fishery, with members falling on both sides. Concerns were raised about light boats "holding ground" and excluding seiners they are not working with from accessing productive fishing areas. Most members felt that some limitation on the number of light boats would benefit the fishery, with most input centered around allowing an equal number of light boats as seine vessels (presuming a limited entry system for seine vessels in the future). A concept of having each light boat registered to an individual seiner for the season was discussed, but most saw this as financially unworkable for the light boats. Prohibiting light boats was characterized by some as patently unfair, given that there had already been participation and investment by light boats in Oregon. ODFW expressed appreciation for the ideas that MSAP members brought to the table and recognized it would continue to be a challenging issue going forward.

New, emerging, or other issues identified by panel

ODFW reviewed issues that had been identified by members at the previous MSAP meeting including limiting weekend closures to the summer and fall season, a closed season at the height of crab season (e.g., Dec 1-Apr 1), a 30-day stand down period for vessels that had participated in another states' squid fishery before being allowed to enter the Oregon fishery, and deductions for

water weight in landing. Staff indicated that weekend closures would be evaluated but changes were not being entertained at this time and raised potential legal concerns with a stand down period. ODFW clarified that current rules require weight to be taken at the time of landing without deduction, and the panel agreed this is not an issue that ODFW needed to address.

ODFW asked if members had any new issues that they would like to discuss in the future which led to a discussion on the limit on pumping catch from another vessels pursued seine which is set at no more than 20% of a landing. Some members felt the limit should be raised or removed to reduce wastage from releasing entrained squid, although concerns were raised about introducing tender vessels to the fishery.

Public Comment

ODFW offered members of the public an opportunity to comment at the end of the meeting and three people did so. Public comment supported continued use of light boats in the Oregon squid fishery citing investments made and contributions to local communities, and opposed a closed season because the commenter would like to explore dip net fishing outside of crab grounds in the winter. ODFW confirmed that the Commission would be able to act on staff recommendations at the February meeting in response to a question.