

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

~ 2019-20 ... THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

~CWPA INTERVENES IN ANCHOVY LAWSUIT  
~SARDINE STOCK ASSESSMENT NOW MUST ACCOUNT FOR NEARSHORE ABUNDANCE

~SQUID RESEARCH: 2019-20 FINDINGS

### CWPA NEWS:

~2019-20 FINANCIAL REPORT

~2020-21 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### A CLOSER LOOK:

CWPA COOPERATIVE NEARSHORE RESEARCH DOCUMENTS SARDINE AND ANCHOVY ABUNDANCE – SETS PRECEDENT

### THE LAST WORDS

\* CWPA SECURES DISASTER RELIEF FOR SARDINE FISHERY

+ SAVING SEAFOOD VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS SARDINE FISHERMEN

CWPA PROMOTES 'GOOD NEWS' AND PROTECTS ACCESS FOR THE FUTURE OF CA'S WETFISH INDUSTRY.

EDITOR: D.B. PLESCHNER

## FY 2019–20 ...THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

In 2019-20, your Executive Director again represented CWPA...

~30 days in meetings and webinars related to federal CPS, Sardine, Anchovy, Forage and Ecosystem issues, including a two-day Climate and Communities 'scenario planning' workshop

~2 days in state webinars and teleconferences related to "sustainable fishing communities" and California's cooperative research program with CDFW and SWFSC

~4 days in meetings and teleconferences related to association and wetfish industry business, including meetings regarding disaster relief, and the Tri-National Sardine and Pelagic Fish Forum

### In summary:

Maintaining access in 2019-20 was hugely challenging -- and landings were the lowest ever recorded in CWPA's 16-year history. Squid landings tanked in California, as OR squid landings increased and WA prepared to initiate a squid fishery. As of February 28, 2020 landings of market squid in CA totaled only 14,609.8 st. Pacific mackerel landings were 4,157 st. and 2019 Anchovy landings were 11,204 st, most caught in Monterey. (Clearly, paltry landings translated into decreased assessment revenue in 2019, forcing CWPA to utilize a substantial part of our 'rainy day' reserve, and midyear we also cut non-essential spending and revised the budget, which the Board approved in February. The revised budget was the basis for FY 2020-21 proposed expenditures, which the new Board approved at the Annual Meeting in March.)

### Recapping highlights in 2019:

- CWPA applied for and was awarded \$1.6 million in sardine disaster relief funds for the years 2015-16. Funds will be distributed in 2020 to all vessel owners and processors who possessed active CPS LE permits and had sardine landings in 2014 or 2015, and harvested or processed sardine in the eligibility window 2010-2014.
- We've also been approved for additional funding for the years 2017-19. We recently learned that the amount is \$2.2 million dollars. We're now working with CDFW to develop the spend plan for this new award. However, we won't see funds for at least another year or more.
- CWPA gained recognition that a substantial biomass of sardine and anchovy reside nearshore and this biomass now must be accounted for in stock assessments.

- CWPA's joint aerial survey with CDFW to assess nearshore CPS was approved and used in the 2020 sardine assessment (see A Closer Look for more). With research funding allocated from 2015-16 sardine disaster relief, we also intend to mount nearshore acoustic surveys in cooperation with the SW Fisheries Science Center to expand CPS biomass estimates.

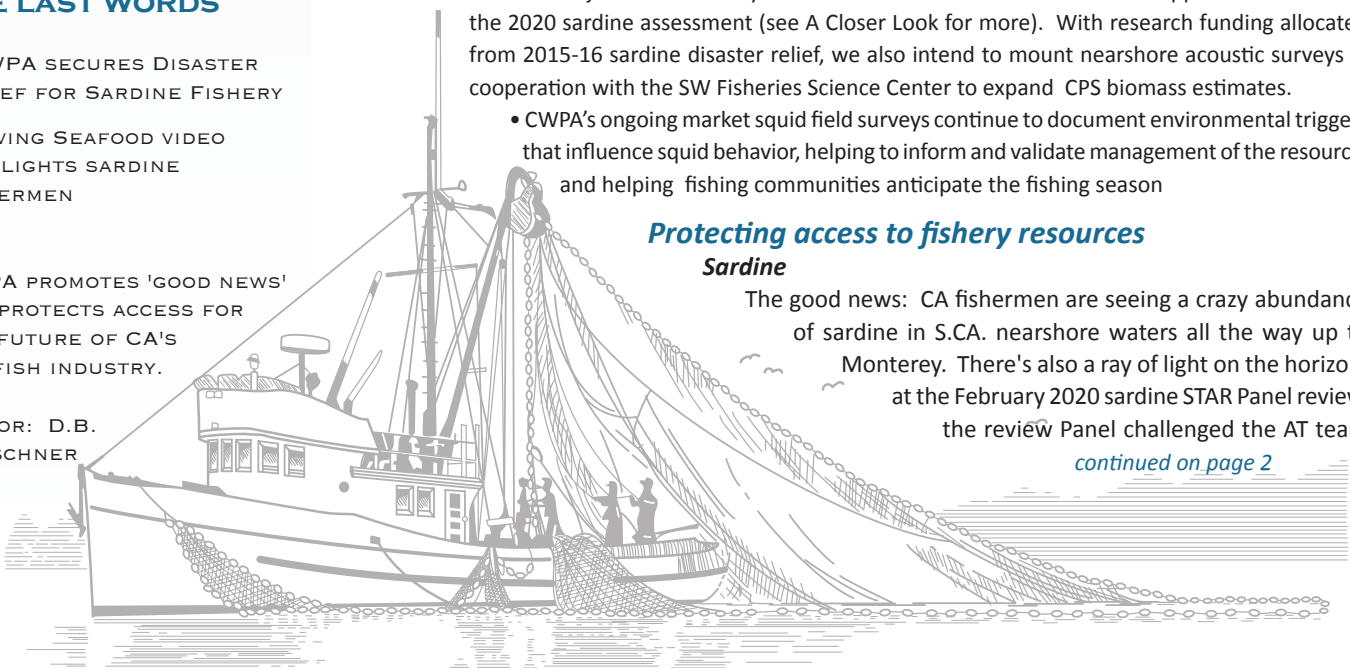
- CWPA's ongoing market squid field surveys continue to document environmental triggers that influence squid behavior, helping to inform and validate management of the resource, and helping fishing communities anticipate the fishing season

### Protecting access to fishery resources

#### Sardine

The good news: CA fishermen are seeing a crazy abundance of sardine in S.CA. nearshore waters all the way up to Monterey. There's also a ray of light on the horizon: at the February 2020 sardine STAR Panel review, the review Panel challenged the AT team

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## A CLOSER LOOK...

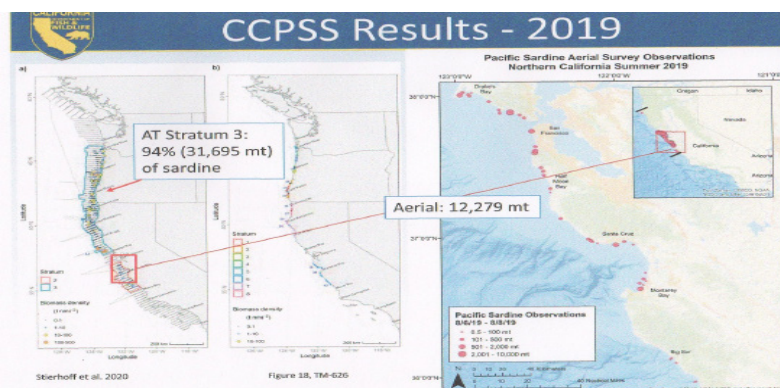
*CWPA Nearshore Research documents CPS abundance...and sets a huge precedent*

Persistence pays! CWPA has partnered with CDFW since 2012 to document sardines and other CPS in nearshore waters inshore of NOAA acoustic surveys. In both 2018 and 2019, we received Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP), allowing us to target sardines for research. The purpose of this research is to develop a variance estimator and bias correction factor to qualify spotter pilot estimates of CPS abundance in nearshore waters for use in stock assessments. Current assessments exclude the area inside about 50 meters depth, but 70 percent or more of CA CPS landings are caught inside the 20 fathom curve.

Spotter pilot Devin Reed has flown many dozens of replicate aerial transects in both the S.C.A. Bight, and Monterey, photo-documenting all visible CPS schools, then he set our EFP charter vessels on random schools of various sizes. The boats were tasked with wrapping entire schools; these "point sets" must capture more than 80 percent of the school to be valid.

CDFW presented analyses of the data to the Council's Science and Statistical Committee (SSC), and in 2019 (finally!) the SSC endorsed the estimates for use. (Turns out Devin's estimates are 95% accurate!)

At the 2020 sardine STAR panel review, the panel endorsed use of the aerial estimates as a nearshore correction factor, after recognizing that a substantial biomass of sardine was not counted in NOAA's largely offshore acoustic trawl (AT) survey. In fact,



the Department's aerial estimate in a small section of the central coast (the survey was hampered by weather) represented 30 percent of NOAA's total coastwide biomass estimate! This had a big impact on the 2020 stock assessment, as the AT survey had predicted continued decline, but not when the aerial data were included. This addition also sets a huge double precedent: scientists now acknowledge that nearshore abundance must be included in biomass estimates, and the aerial survey is now approved for use in future stock assessments!

Now CWPA is also collaborating with the SW Fisheries Science Center to conduct a nearshore acoustic survey concurrent with NOAA's summer AT cruise (hopefully the cruise will run in 2020). We're borrowing an EK-60 acoustic array to pole mount on a seiner for what we estimate will be a 20-day cruise -- running transects at 5-mile intervals and three miles long the length of the CA coast from Bodega Bay to the Mexican border to document all the fish the NOAA ship misses. Our goal is to correct the erroneous sardine stock assessment in hopes that an accurate biomass estimate will lead to reopening the sardine fishery.

### 2019-20 CONTINUED

and stock assessment scientists to use the CDFW nearshore aerial survey estimate in the model. CDFW's summer 2019 survey of a relatively small section of the Central Coast (limited by weather) estimated a biomass of about 12,300 mt in that 200 mile area – but that represented more than 30 percent of the total AT survey's coastwide biomass estimate. Incorporating the aerial survey estimate as a nearshore correction factor reduced the Q (catchability fraction) of the AT survey from 1+ (assuming that the AT survey 'sees' all the fish) to 0.73. This is great news: [1] all our EFP work has qualified CDFW aerial survey estimates for use in stock assessments, and [2] finally there is recognition that nearshore abundance needs to be counted — setting a huge precedent for the future.

#### **Anchovy**

As predicted last year, Oceana is back in court, challenging the revised anchovy OFL. But this time CWPA voted to intervene, thanks to pledges from markets (\$5,000 apiece) and fishermen (\$1,000 each). We filed our response brief on April 20. We have our work cut out to educate the judge that the Magnuson Act is different from the Endangered Species Act: Optimum Yield is supposed to strike a balance between protection and sustainable fisheries, and 'overfishing' does not need to be calculated every year. Apparently the judge (the same judge that awarded Oceana the 'win' in the first round) does not understand that yet – but she'll learn soon.

One undeniable fact: the anchovy population has exploded. The spring CalCOFI egg/larval survey reported a record number of anchovy eggs – double the historic high. Even the 2019 Acoustic Trawl survey saw a lot of anchovy, and produced an estimate of about 800,000 tons, not counting the nearshore area inside the AT survey grid. The egg-larval biomass estimate in 2017 was estimated at 1.1 million tons, and it must be exponentially higher by now. So, the judge will need to face the fact that the fishery had a negligible impact on the anchovy resource. The hearing on Cross-Motions for Summary Judgment is set for June 25 at 1:30 PM.

Meanwhile, the Council continues its deliberations on the frequency of stock assessments and changes to OFL and ABC. The SWFSC plans to conduct an anchovy stock assessment in 2021.

#### **Market Squid**

Landings were dimly low in 2019. By February 28, 2020 landings of market squid in CA totaled only 14,609.8 st. NOAA climate predictions acknowledged that we suffered a mild El Niño in 2018-19, while squid landings in OR in early 2020 hit a record high. Some CA vessels went north to fish squid, but returned when squid showed up again in Monterey. Current ENSO neutral conditions offer hope for better fishing in 2020.

## The Last Words.

Good news: The Secretary of Commerce again answered CWPA's request for sardine disaster relief by awarding \$2.2 million for 2017-19. This is in addition to the \$1.64 million relief awarded for 2015-16. All funds are administered by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and distribution is based on spending plans developed by CDFW in consultation with industry. CDFW's 2015-16 spend plan followed the industry recommendation to earmark 20 percent for collaborative research (administered by CWPA) to continue our nearshore surveys, and distributes the balance at 65% to eligible fishermen and 35% to eligible processors. PSMFC recently received word that 2015-16 relief funds are now available for distribution and will send letters to the list of eligible fishermen and processors supplied by CDFW, who also provided landings. The PSMFC letters will ask individuals to verify landings records, then will send checks.

We're now going through the same process to confirm the 2017-19 spend plan (funds may be available in a couple of years).

In light of the critical need to improve CPS stock assessments, the CWPA Board recently voted to increase the research element in the 2017-19 spend plan to 34%, which would cover an additional two years of aerial and acoustic survey work, plus provide enough funding to charter seiners to run a side-by-side test of catchability between AT trawl and purse seine. During the acoustic trawl methods review in 2018,



the review panel recommended this study, after criticizing the current NOAA AT practice of collecting backscatter during daytime and backtracking to the general area to trawl for samples at night. It's clear that AT surveys are not only missing nearshore fish, they're missing fast moving sardines and mackerel as well. So this study will be important to improve the accuracy of stock assessments.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS – 2020-21

President	Vince Torre <i>Tri-Marine Fish Company</i>
Vice President	Neil Guglielmo <i>Fisherman</i>
Treasurer-Secretary	Mike Carpenter <i>Sun Coast Calamari</i>
San Pedro (alternate)	Vince Torre <i>Lillo Augello</i> <i>Southern Coast Trading</i> Nick Jurlin <i>Richie Ashley</i>
(alternate)	
Ventura-Hueneme (alternate)	Mike Carpenter <i>Rick Mayer, MarcusFood</i> Neil Guglielmo <i>David Haworth</i>
(alternate)	
Monterey (alternate)	Sal Tringali, MFC <i>Pete Guglielmo, SCS</i> David Crabbe Anthony Russo
FAO-77 (alternate)	Vic Mandich <i>Rick Geist</i>
Executive Director	Diane Pleschner-Steele



### 2019-20 CONTINUED

Spring offshore research cruises found squid abundant in the Central CA Current and the fishery is now underway in Monterey, with as many as 40 boats participating.

**On the squid research front**, Paralarvae counts were still low in S.CA. as of February, but the abundance of squid in offshore surveys, at least in the Central CA Current, coupled with neutral ocean conditions, bodes well for better fishing in the coming year. Time will tell. We're surveying in the Monterey area in June and July.



### Promote Sustainable Production & Facilitate Communications

In 2019-20 CWPA again contracted with **David Gogel** to maintain our Fishing News blog, [CaliforniaWetfish.org/FishingNews](http://CaliforniaWetfish.org/FishingNews) and with **Razor Sharp PR** to assist with our media outreach program.

We also partnered with **Saving Seafood** to produce and distribute nationwide a video highlighting a generational fishing family and their travails with sardine stock assessments – and their hope that our surveys will help achieve change.

We garnered extensive media coverage with our op eds – setting the record straight on CPS fishing in CA. The ED also communicated with FG Commissioners, CDFW, CA Legislators and Congressional representatives on issues of importance to industry.

CWPA also maintains our website: [www.CaliforniaWetfish.org](http://www.CaliforniaWetfish.org)

## 2019-20

### WHERE THE MONEY WENT

#### SPECIES ASSESSED APR'19-MAR'20

P.MACKEREL	4,599 ST
J.MACKEREL	19
SARDINE	1,399
SQUID	21,799
ANCHOVY	22,859
OTHER	863
TOTAL (ROUNDED)	51,560 ST
(FISHERMEN & PROCESSORS COMBINED)	

#### INCOME (ROUNDED)

RETAINED 3/31/19	\$511,225.
DEPOSITED 2019-20	
FISHERMEN	86,565.
PROCESSORS	96,747.
TOTAL INTEREST	471.
ASSOCIATE MEMBERS	1,750.
SWFSC RES. CONTRACTS	66,150.
CPS LEGAL DONATIONS	69,000.
TRINATIONAL REG.	1,406.
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$322,089.</b>

#### EXPENSES

ED BUSINESS TRAVEL TOTAL	5,157.
AIRFARE	170.
AUTO / TRAIN	732.
LODGING	2,170.
MEALS + INCIDENTAL	2,085.
BOARD TRAVEL	4,817.
DBP&A SERVICES	90,000.
DUES,SUBSCRIPT,CONTRIB.	456.
MEETINGS / ANN. REPORT	19.
OFFICE EXPENSES (TOTAL)	7,179.
OPERATIONS,SUPPLIES	4,459.
POSTAGE, XEROX, PHONE	2,719.
PROFESSIONAL	
LIAB.INS, CPA	9,099.
GOV REL,LEG. CONSULT	24,860.
GEN LEGAL	23,234.
LEGAL-ANCHOVY	97,181.
PUBLIC RELATIONS	7,200.
SAVING SEAFOOD – NCFC	40,005.
SCIENTIFIC CONSULTING	25,017.
SQUID RESEARCH	113,691.
CPS/SARDINE RESEARCH (CDFW EFP, ACOUSTIC)	171,785.
WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA	5,250.
TRINATIONAL EXPENSE	1,356.
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$626,307.</b>
NET ORDINARY INCOME	(304,218.)
OTHER INCOME/EXPENSE	4,744.
NET INCOME 3/31/20	(299,474)

#### TOTAL LIABILITIES/

<b>EQUITY 3/31/20</b>	<b>\$211,751.</b>
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## CALIFORNIA WETFISH PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

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### CWPA SQUID RESEARCH 2019 Highlights

#### Recap:

- ~ High landings and paralarval abundance are linked to colder water.
- ~ Oceanographic transition (El Niño) forces squid to move north.
- ~ Sustained warm water causes decline in abundance.

#### 2019 Findings:

- Conditions similar to 2018 for most of the year
  - ~ Low paralarval abundance
  - ~ Reduced productivity

#### Take home message:

- ~ Still relatively low paralarval abundance (in S.C.A.)
- ~ Still in transition from low to high abundance
- ~ 1982 & 1997 recoveries were fast, 2015 was more sustained warm period - continuing through mild El Niño 2018-19
- ~ Recovery happens fast when conditions improve

CWPA's growing database of relative paralarvae abundance facilitates evaluation of fishery management and "sustainability". To date our data support the finding that squid abundance is strongly influenced by environmental variables, and the current management strategy is effective.

## CWPA GOALS

### Maintain Access to Resources

- Track legislation & coordinate response
- Seek grant funding for research
- Communicate with management agencies to develop fishery management plans

### Promote Sustainable Production

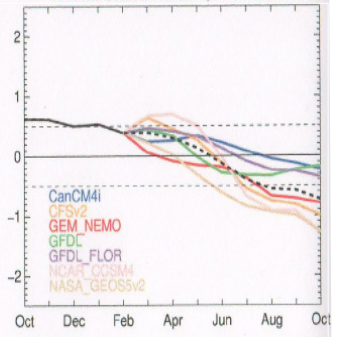
- Track issues & coordinate response
- Communicate with authorities re: production issues
- Facilitate resolution
- \* Sponsor research

### Facilitate Communication within and outside wetfish industry

- Serve as liaison between fishermen and processors
- Serve as liaison between industry and management
- \* Produce periodic newsletters to inform industry of news and issues

**ENSO-neutral is favored through Northern Hemisphere spring 2020 (~60% chance), continuing through summer 2020 (~50% chance)**

from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center



With 10 years of data covering 48 stations, 81 surveys, 1,415 net tows (73 surveys in S.C.A.), CWPA scientist Joel VanNoord recently published a second paper in the journal *Marine Ecology: Dynamic spawning patterns in California Market Squid Inferred through paralarval observation in the S.C.A. Bight, 2012-2019*. Sea surface temperature and geographic variables were generally the most important variables. These findings indicate that squid spawning behaviors and habitat are adaptable and dependent on oceanography and population density.

## CWPA – PURPOSE AND FUTURE

In today's political climate, with Legislative term limits and changes in administration every few years, fisheries need an industry group in place to maintain the fishery profile: the fishery's "institutional" knowledge base and long-term goals. The goal of CWPA is to provide a platform for the wetfish industry to speak with one voice, facilitate accurate science, and put the industry's best interests forward!

A non-profit organization such as CWPA commands attention notwithstanding political or management climate. It fosters communication with state and federal fishery managers and facilitates interaction and consensus building among industry and management, as well as the Legislature and Congress. Maintaining a clear presence in research and management circles is essential now, with renewed focus on precautionary management, including new forage fish management policy, and new focus on ecosystem-based management. The ongoing push for marine reserves to 'protect' marine resources from climate change adds yet another challenge. Maintaining "eyes on the ground" and a continued presence in management circles is critically important to stay in business.

In this era of precautionary management, it is essential to base management decisions on accurate science. Without good data, the precautionary principle will be applied and, as a result, fishermen and processors may not have a viable fishery. Field research is expensive, and that's where industry groups like CWPA can play a critically important collaborative role. CWPA has developed sound partnerships with both the Department of Fish and Wildlife and SW Fisheries Science Center and we are making headway to improve the accuracy of stock assessments.

Research is the key to the future!