

**THE GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM (GMT) REPORT ON
 CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS**

The GMT reviewed several inseason management issues and have the following recommendations for consideration by the Council.

COMMERCIAL

Limited Entry Bottom Trawl Fishery Trip Limit Adjustments

Catch of petrale sole and sablefish in the limited entry bottom trawl fisheries is tracking behind projections. The GMT considered increasing trip limits in Period 6 (November-December) to 70,000 lb per 2 months for petrale sole and to 20,000 lb per 2 months for sablefish to provide some increase in fishing opportunity while staying within the OYs for these species. The GMT reviewed whether increased catches of these species could be accommodated without increasing impacts on overfished species beyond amounts available in the bycatch scorecard. The estimated mortality of overfished and target species in the limited entry bottom trawl fishery is shown in the following table.

Estimated Mortality in the LE Bottom Trawl Sector

		North	South	Total
Rebuilding Species	Canary	5.0	2.3	7.3
	POP	57.0	0.0	57.0
	Darkblotch	119.5	43.0	162.5
	Widow	0.6	0.1	0.6
	Bocaccio	0.0	57.5	57.5
	Yelloweye	0.0	0.1	0.1
	Cowcod	0.0	2.5	2.5
Target Species	Sablefish	2089.2	716.2	2805.4
	Longspine	273.8	543.3	817.0
	Shortspine	597.1	299.5	896.5
	Dover	5427.5	1983.5	7411.0
	Arrowtooth	4137.3	35.7	4173.0
	Petrale	2169.9	419.3	2589.2
	Other Flat	593.8	611.0	1204.8
	Slope Rock	173.3	219.6	392.9

These estimated impacts on overfished species are within amounts available in the bycatch scorecard.

Therefore, the GMT recommends that the limited entry trawl fishery trip limits for Period 6 (November-December) be adjusted as follows:

- 1) north of 40°10' N. latitude, increase petrale sole trip limits from 60,000 lb per 2 months to 70,000 lb per 2 months for large and small footrope trawl gear;
- 2) south of 40°10' N. latitude, increase petrale sole trip limits from 60,000 lb per 2 months to 70,000 lb per 2 months;
- 3) north of 40°10' N. latitude, increase sablefish trip limits from 14,000 lb per 2 months to 20,000 lb per 2 months for large and small footrope trawl gear;
- 4) south of 40°10' N. latitude, increase sablefish trip limits from 17,000 lb per 2 months to 20,000 lb per 2 months.

Update on Darkblotched Rockfish Catch in the Whiting Fishery

In the non-tribal sectors of the whiting fishery, overfished species bycatch limits are currently in place for canary rockfish (4.7 mt), widow rockfish (200 mt), and, after the June 2006 Council meeting, darkblotched rockfish (25 mt). The 25 mt darkblotched rockfish bycatch limit for the non-tribal whiting sectors is intended to reduce the likelihood of the darkblotched rockfish OY from being exceeded, and reduce the risk of the whiting fishery affecting the continuance of other groundfish fisheries that encounter darkblotched rockfish.

Data available in NMFS Whiting Report #12 through September 6, 2006, indicates that 13.23 mt of darkblotched rockfish has been taken by the non-tribal whiting sectors. Catch rates of darkblotched rockfish have decreased since mid June (the June 19 whiting report indicated that 11.07 mt of darkblotched rockfish had been taken through June 18). At this time the fishery is projected to stay within the specified bycatch limit.

Update on Darkblotched Rockfish Catch in the Limited Entry Bottom Trawl Fishery

At the Council's June 2006 meeting, the Council recommended inseason actions to slow the catch of darkblotched rockfish in the bottom trawl fishery. Inseason action was taken for the limited entry trawl fishery north of 38° N. latitude changing trip limits and the seaward boundary of the trawl RCA with the intent to slow catch of darkblotched rockfish enough to have a period 6 petrale sole fishery. Data available through August indicates that 122 mt of darkblotched rockfish has been taken by the limited entry bottom trawl fishery and a total of 155.2 mt could be taken if the current catch rates continue throughout the season and before proposed adjustments are adopted.

Update on the Lingcod Harvest Guideline

At the June 2006 meeting, the Council recommended allowing the lingcod harvest guideline to be exceeded in 2006 to prevent the commercial fishery from being unnecessarily constrained. PacFIN estimates the commercial catch of lingcod through August to be 273 mt, 58.3 mt over the 2006 commercial harvest guideline for lingcod of 214.7 mt. However, the anticipated total catch through the end of the year is still not expected to exceed either the lingcod OYs (1,801 mt north of 42° N. latitude and 612 mt south of 42° N. lat) or the ABC (2,716 mt). Therefore, the GMT recommends no further action at this time and will continue to monitor lingcod catch.

Widow Rockfish Bycatch Limit in the Whiting Fishery

The GAP requested that the GMT consider an increase in the widow bycatch limit for the non-tribal whiting fishery to buffer against a disaster tow that might shut down the fishery before the whiting quota is achieved. In the non-tribal sectors of the whiting fishery, the bycatch limit for

widow rockfish is 200 mt. Bycatch of widow rockfish in the whiting fishery was estimated in NMFS Whiting Report #12 to be at 186.47 mt through September 6, 2006. The GMT estimates widow rockfish catch in all commercial groundfish fisheries to be 200 mt through August.

Also, the tribal midwater trawl fishery is likely to take less widow rockfish than the 40 mt projected in the bycatch scorecard. While current estimates of tribal midwater trawl widow catch is approximately 5 mt, the Makah tribe plans to have a fall midwater fishery that will take additional widow rockfish.

The GMT considered whether to increase the bycatch limits for widow rockfish in the non-tribal whiting fishery above the 200 mt specified in regulation. The whiting fishery is nearing the end of its seasons for the various sectors. The shorebased fishery has already closed. The mothership fishery has approximately 5,000 mt (~9% of allocation) remaining, and the catcher/processor fishery has approximately 15,000 mt (~20% of allocation) remaining. Catch of widow rockfish in the whiting fishery is expected to remain low through the remainder of the season. However, there is the potential for a large tow of widow rockfish. There have been past unexpectedly high tows upwards of 20 mt. Therefore, while catch of widow rockfish is expected to remain low, the Council might consider increasing the widow bycatch limit enough to cover an unexpectedly high tow of approximately 20 mt. Increasing the bycatch limit from 200 mt to 215-220 mt should provide enough widow rockfish to allow the whiting fisheries to catch their whiting allocations without the threat of a single large widow tow shutting whiting fisheries down early while remaining within the widow OY. The GMT notes that the Council recommended increasing the widow bycatch limit in September 2005 from 200 mt to 212 mt.

Open Access DTL Sablefish Limits North of 36° N. latitude

On May 1, 2006, per the Council's recommendation, NMFS reduced the open access (OA) sablefish daily trip limit, or DTL, fishery cumulative trip limit north of 36° N. latitude from 5,000 lb per 2 months to 3,000 lb per 2 months. The Council recommended this reduction in anticipation of a large influx of fishing effort into the sablefish DTL fishery as a result of salmon fishery closures. Reducing the cumulative limit was intended to provide for a longer season, which was thought to most benefit fishers who have historically participated in the year-round fishery.

To date, the catch of OA sablefish is higher in 2006 than catch projected from historical data. This supports the assumptions that restrictions in the salmon fishery may have resulted in increased effort in the OA DTL fishery. PacFIN estimates the OA sablefish DTL catch through August to be 524 mt, out of a 613 mt harvest guideline north of 36° N. latitude. Given that this sector has caught an average of 70-80 mt of sablefish per month since March, the OA DTL fishery is expected to catch their sablefish allocation in early October.

The GMT considered lowering limits in this fishery to extend the season, but those limits would not be in place until October 1 at the earliest. Since the allocation is likely to be reached around that time, lowering limits is not an option for keeping this fishery within its allocation. The GMT also considered whether other fisheries were projected to take their sablefish allocations and if allowing the OA DTL fishery to exceed their allocation might be an option. However, the GMT raised several concerns with this option.

1. While the limited entry trawl fishery is not projected to harvest their sablefish allocation, even with the proposed increase in sablefish trawl trip limits, the OA DTL fishery would have a higher mortality on canary rockfish compared to estimated limited entry trawl mortality. The mortality estimates in the bycatch scorecard for canary rockfish do not have any residual amount available. Therefore, the OA directed groundfish estimate of 3.0 mt, which includes estimates for the OA DTL fisheries, does not have room to increase unless another sector of the fishery can be reduced.
2. Another option would be to reduce trip limits in the limited entry (LE) fixed gear sablefish DTL fishery. However, the GMT is concerned that this is not fair given that some limited entry fixed gear participants have not yet completed their primary sablefish season and, therefore, have not yet had an opportunity to participate in the LE sablefish DTL fishery. This option brings up fairness issues by lowering trip limits in the LE DTL fishery because the OA DTL fishery is suffering from the effects of increased effort in their fishery.

Therefore, the GMT recommends that beginning October 1, the OA DTL fishery trip limits be adjusted north of 36° N. latitude from “300 lb per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 1,000 lb, not to exceed 3,000 lb per 2 months” to “closed.”

Limited Entry Fixed Gear & Open Access DTL Sablefish Limits South of 36° N. latitude

The GMT considered a recommendation from the GAP to increase the LE & OA sablefish DTL fisheries south of 36° N. latitude from 350 lb per day to 500 lb per day beginning October 1, leaving the weekly limit the same. Leaving the weekly limit the same is intended to discourage increased effort from shifting from north of 36° N. latitude if that area is closed beginning October 1. This action is being considered because the LE & OA sablefish DTL fisheries south of 36° N. latitude are tracking behind schedule. PacFIN QSM data through the end of August estimates 52 mt out of a 271 mt total catch OY. There is not a limited entry or open access sablefish allocation in this area. This action would not increase estimated impacts on overfished species as reported in the bycatch scorecard, including canary rockfish. Values currently in the bycatch scorecard assume that this sector will achieve their allocation.

Therefore, the GMT recommends that beginning October 1, the LE & OA sablefish DTL fishery trip limits be adjusted south of 36° N. latitude from “350 lb per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 1,050 lb” to “500 lb per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 1,050 lb.”

Update on California Commercial Nearshore Fisheries

CDFG has taken two inseason actions for commercial nearshore fisheries for species with state trip limits that are more restrictive than federal trip limits. First, CDFG closed their commercial greenling fishery effective August 1. Second, CDFG recently lowered their 2-month Sep-Oct cabezon trip limit from 900 lbs to 200 lbs in the hope that the fishery can continue to the end of the year.

RECREATIONAL

There are no inseason recreational proposals for Washington or California. Washington reports that their recreational fisheries are tracking behind expected catches at this point in time. Recreational take of groundfish in California through June is currently tracking close to or below expected levels. A comparison to annual projections for species of concern (using actual take plus model projections for remaining months) remains below harvest targets.

Oregon Recreational Fishery

Vermilion rockfish are managed within a state harvest limit, as part of the “other nearshore rockfish” aggregate (also including brown, china, copper, grass, quillback, and tiger rockfishes). In June, the catch rate of the “other nearshore rockfish” aggregate was tracking higher than expected and projections showed that without action the harvest limit would be prematurely attained. Vermilion rockfish represented approximately half of the landings in the “other nearshore rockfish aggregate”; therefore ODFW took management action specific to vermilion rockfish to prevent reaching the harvest limit. Beginning on June 24, 2006 retention of vermilion rockfish was prohibited in the recreational ocean and estuary boat fisheries.

The GMT recommends conforming federal recreational regulations to state regulations by prohibiting the retention of vermilion rockfish by boat anglers.

RESEARCH

Canary Rockfish in the Research Catch

Catch of canary rockfish by research vessels is higher than projected in the bycatch scorecard for 2006. Previously, the bycatch scorecard had projected 3 mt of canary rockfish would be taken in research catch. Based on preliminary information from research vessels to date, 7.5 mt is a better estimate of current research catch. This will reduce the amount of “residual” canary rockfish in the bycatch scorecard to a negative number, -1.2 mt. Research surveys are continuing from Eureka to San Diego, so there is still a possibility of increased catch of canary rockfish. However, more than 90% of the canary rockfish take in the historical triennial trawl survey occurs north of Eureka.

However, other ongoing fisheries are tracking behind their projected take of canary rockfish. The non-tribal whiting fisheries have taken 2.5 mt out of their 4.7 mt canary rockfish bycatch limit. The tribal whiting fishery has taken 0.3 mt through August out of a projected 1.6 mt canary mortality and the tribal midwater trawl fishery is also tracking behind in the bycatch scorecard. In addition, recreational fisheries are tracking behind their estimated canary take at this time. Thus, there is the potential for canary rockfish total mortality to come in below the bycatch scorecard projections for the year. Projected total mortality of canary rockfish for the year in the bycatch scorecard is 48.3 mt, approximately 1.2 mt over the OY of 47.1.

The GMT discussed options to address this projected potential overage of the canary OY.

1. Reduce the canary rockfish bycatch limit for the non-tribal whiting fishery by at least 1.2 mt.
2. Reduce trip limits or adjust RCAs in other sectors of the fishery.

Yelloweye Rockfish in Research Catch

The Oregon LOA research has caught more yelloweye rockfish than projected. The Oregon research to date has caught the 5 yelloweye rockfish (in numbers of fish), the same number it projected for the entire research project. The research does not expect to take any additional yelloweye rockfish, however, they would like the Council's blessing in continuing their research with the acknowledgement that there is the potential to catch a few additional yelloweye rockfish. The estimated impact of this research adds a couple of pounds to research catch. Therefore, it is within the bycatch scorecard estimated mortality of 2.0 mt of yelloweye rockfish from research catch.

SCORECARD UPDATE

There are two versions of the bycatch scorecard attached to this statement. The first version shows updates to the scorecard since the June Council meeting. These include: 1) estimated impacts to canary rockfish from the research catch; 2) estimated total mortality of canary rockfish and cowcod for the limited entry trawl non-whiting fleet; and 3) estimated mortality from the CA early season whiting EFP south of 40°10' N. latitude. The CA EFP total mortality estimates for canary, darkblotched, and widow rockfish (0.1 mt, 0.2 mt, and 0.4 mt, respectively) were already included in the non-tribal whiting bycatch limits and have therefore been reduced to zero under the EFP row in the bycatch scorecard.

The second version of the scorecard projects mortality to bocaccio, darkblotched rockfish, and POP from the proposed trawl trip limits increases. Bycatch scorecard adjustments to the bycatch limit for widow rockfish in the non-tribal whiting sectors, if applicable, have not been made at this time.

GMT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase limited entry trawl fishery trip limits for petrale sole and sablefish coastwide in Period 6 (November-December).
- Consider raising the non-tribal whiting widow bycatch limit.
- Close the OA sablefish DTL fishery north of 36° N. latitude beginning October 1.
- Increase the LE & OA sablefish DTL fishery south of 36° N. latitude beginning October 1 (weekly limits would remain status quo).
- Conform federal recreational regulations to state regulations by prohibiting the retention of vermillion rockfish by boat anglers.
- Consider action to reduce projected take of canary rockfish.

Estimated Total Mortality Impacts Updated with 2006 OY levels - Prior to September Trawl Adjustments

9/12/2006 18:08							
Fishery	Bocaccio a/	Canary	Cowcod	Dkbl	POP	Widow	Yelloweye
Limited Entry Trawl- Non-whiting	57.3	7.3	2.5	155.2	56.8	0.6	0.1
Limited Entry Trawl- Whiting							
At-sea whiting motherships					1.0		0.0
At-sea whiting cat-proc		4.7		25.0	2.9	200.0	0.0
Shoreside whiting					1.8		0.0
Tribal whiting		1.6		0.0	0.6	6.1	0.0
Tribal							
Midwater Trawl		1.8		0.0	0.0	40.0	0.0
Bottom Trawl		0.8		0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0
Troll		0.5		0.0	0.0		0.0
Fixed gear		0.3		0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
Limited Entry Fixed Gear	13.4	1.2	0.1	1.3	0.4	0.5	2.9
Open Access: Directed Groundfish	10.6	3.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	3.0
Open Access: Incidental Groundfish							
CA Halibut	0.1	0.1		0.0	0.0		
CA Gillnet b/	0.5			0.0	0.0	0.0	
CA Sheephead b/				0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CPS- wetfish b/	0.3						
CPS- squid c/							
Dungeness crab b/	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0		
HMS b/		0.0	0.0	0.0			
Pacific Halibut b/	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pink shrimp	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Ridgeback prawn	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Salmon troll	0.2	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2
Sea Cucumber	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Spot Prawn (trap)							
Recreational Groundfish d/							
WA							
OR		8.5				1.4	6.7
CA	98.0	9.3	0.4			8.0	3.7
Research: Includes NMFS trawl shelf-slope surveys, the IPHC halibut survey, and expected impacts from SRPs and LOAs.							
	2.0	7.5	0.1	3.8	3.6	0.9	2.0
Non-EFP Total	182.6	48.3	3.2	185.6	70.9	258.0	21.1
EFPs e/							
CA early season whiting S. of 40°10'	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EFP Subtotal	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	182.6	48.3	3.2	185.6	70.9	258.0	21.1
2006 OY	309	47.1	4.2	200	447	289	27
Difference	126.4	-1.2	1.0	14.5	376.1	31.1	5.9
Percent of OY	59.1%	102.5%	76.2%	92.8%	15.9%	89.3%	78.0%
Key	= either not applicable; trace amount (<0.01 mt); or not reported in						

a/ South of 40°10' N. lat.

b/ Mortality estimates are not hard numbers; based on the GMT's best professional judgment.

c/ Bycatch amounts by species unavailable, but bocaccio occurred in 0.1% of all port samples and other rockfish in another 0.1% of all port samples (and squid fisheries usually land their whole catch). In 2001, out of 84,000 mt total landings 1 mt was gr

d/ Values for yelloweye in California represent specified harvest guidelines.

e/ Values are proposed EFP bycatch caps, not estimates of total mortality. The EFP is terminated inseason if the cap is projected to be attained early.

Estimated Total Mortality Impacts Updated with 2006 OY levels - Proposed September Trawl Adjustments

9/12/2006 18:06							
Fishery	Bocaccio a/	Canary	Cowcod	Dkbl	POP	Widow	Yelloweye
Limited Entry Trawl- Non-whiting	57.5	7.3	2.5	162.5	57.0	0.6	0.1
Limited Entry Trawl- Whiting							
At-sea whiting motherships					1.0		0.0
At-sea whiting cat-proc		4.7		25.0	2.9	200.0	0.0
Shoreside whiting					1.8		0.0
Tribal whiting		1.6		0.0	0.6	6.1	0.0
Tribal							
Midwater Trawl		1.8		0.0	0.0	40.0	0.0
Bottom Trawl		0.8		0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0
Troll		0.5		0.0	0.0		0.0
Fixed gear		0.3		0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
Limited Entry Fixed Gear	13.4	1.2	0.1	1.3	0.4	0.5	2.9
Open Access: Directed Groundfish	10.6	3.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	3.0
Open Access: Incidental Groundfish							
CA Halibut	0.1	0.1		0.0	0.0		
CA Gillnet b/	0.5			0.0	0.0	0.0	
CA Sheephead b/				0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CPS- wetfish b/	0.3						
CPS- squid c/							
Dungeness crab b/	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0		
HMS b/		0.0	0.0	0.0			
Pacific Halibut b/	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pink shrimp	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Ridgeback prawn	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Salmon troll	0.2	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2
Sea Cucumber	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Spot Prawn (trap)							
Recreational Groundfish d/							
WA							
OR		8.5				1.4	6.7
CA	98.0	9.3	0.4			8.0	3.7
Research: Includes NIMFS trawl shelf-slope surveys, the IPHC halibut survey, and expected impacts from SRPs and LOAs.							
	2.0	7.5	0.1	3.8	3.6	0.9	2.0
Non-EFP Total	182.8	48.3	3.2	192.9	71.1	258.0	21.1
EFPs e/							
CA early season whiting S. of 40°10'	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EFP Subtotal	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	182.8	48.3	3.2	192.9	71.1	258.0	21.1
2006 OY	309	47.1	4.2	200	447	289	27
Difference	126.2	-1.2	1.0	7.1	375.9	31.1	5.9
Percent of OY	59.2%	102.5%	76.2%	96.4%	15.9%	89.3%	78.0%
Key	= either not applicable; trace amount (<0.01 mt); or not reported in						

a/ South of 40°10' N. lat.

b/ Mortality estimates are not hard numbers; based on the GMT's best professional judgment.

c/ Bycatch amounts by species unavailable, but bocaccio occurred in 0.1% of all port samples and other rockfish in another 0.1% of all port samples (and squid fisheries usually land their whole catch). In 2001, out of 84,000 mt total landings 1 mt was gr

d/ Values for yelloweye in California represent specified harvest guidelines.

e/ Values are proposed EFP bycatch caps, not estimates of total mortality. The EFP is terminated inseason if the cap is projected to be attained early.