

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON  
FINAL CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Council adopted several inseason adjustments as part of Agenda Item D.5 and asked the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) to explore a mechanism for an inseason closure of the petrale sole trawl fishery, if needed to stay within the 2006 acceptable biological catch (ABC)/optimum yield (OY), and revisit the projected mortality of canary rockfish in 2007. In addition to responding to these requests, the GMT has some additional inseason issues that merit Council consideration. The GMT recommends revising the sablefish daily-trip-limits for the open access and limited entry fixed gear fisheries south of 36° N latitude. Additionally, the GMT would like to recommend a decrease in the Pacific whiting trip limit specified for 2007 prior to the start of the primary whiting season due to possible canary rockfish bycatch, and a decrease in the 2007 Period 1 and Period 6 petrale sole cumulative limits to avoid early attainment. The GMT discussed all of these issues and offers the following recommendations for consideration.

**Petrale Sole for 2006**

As requested by the Council, the GMT further analyzed available information for the Period 6 petrale fishery and the likelihood of exceeding the ABC/OY for this species in 2006. Based on this analysis, the GMT estimates that Period 6 petrale sole total catch may be as high as 450 mt, leaving a buffer of approximately 180 mt under the ABC/OY. The GMT believes that it is likely that catches will be less than the 450 mt amount, but the GMT discussed options available to control the catch of this species through the end of the year in the event that catch rates appear higher than a rate that will achieve 450 mt. These include: 1) an inseason trigger mechanism to close the petrale sole areas, and 2) voluntary action on the part of industry to reduce petrale sole catches. The GMT concluded that implementing a trigger mechanism is not feasible. The GMT believes that an inseason trigger mechanism may be counter-productive in this case as it may induce a race to fish before the trigger is implemented.

The GMT also discussed the concept of voluntary action on the part of industry. In the summer of 2005, NMFS asked industry to voluntarily reduce catches of petrale sole. The industry response resulted in an immediate 30% reduction of the petrale sole catch rate.

The GMT believes that the risk of exceeding the ABC/OY without a regulatory action or voluntary action is low. However, if the catch rate appears too high, voluntary action on the part of industry is expected to be sufficient to keep catches within the ABC/OY. Therefore, the GMT recommends that the Council not take regulatory action and that NMFS request industry to take voluntary action if catch rates appear too high.

**Petrale Sole for 2007**

If the higher than expected petrale sole catches in 2006 are repeated in 2007, then early attainment of the petrale sole OY is likely. This is especially true since the 2007 petrale sole OY is 263 mt less than the 2006 ABC/OY of 2,762 mt. The currently specified Period 1 and 6 cumulative limits for petrale sole in 2007 are 80,000 lbs per 2 months, which are higher than the 2006 limits. The GMT recommends that limits for Periods 1 and 6 be reduced to 50,000 lbs per

2 months to ensure catches stay within the OY. The GMT will re-evaluate 2007 catches in March, April and June next year to decide if further limit adjustments may be needed in 2007.

### **Sablefish Daily Trip Limit (DTL) Fishery South of 36° N Latitude in 2007**

The GMT discussed sablefish DTL fishery limits that were changed in Wednesday's inseason action (Agenda Item D.6) south of 36° N latitude in 2007 and believes that adopted cumulative limits should be reconsidered. The GMT's original concern over sablefish in the Conception area was due to the anticipation of increased effort and the potential for effort shifts from northern areas. Those effort shifts occurred solely in the open access fishery. While there is no allocation established for limited entry and open access south of 36° N latitude, there is nothing binding the Council from establishing differential trip limits for limited entry and open access, and there are several examples from status quo management. Therefore, the GMT recommends that sablefish DTL limits in the limited entry fishery be returned to the previously scheduled limits of 350 lbs per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 1,050 lbs, while the open access sablefish DTL limits adopted earlier this week in this area remain at 300 lbs per day or one landing per week of up to 700 lbs.

### **Pacific Whiting Trip Limits Prior to the Start of the 2007 Primary Whiting Season**

The primary season for the shorebased whiting sector, which opens on June 15 north of 42° N latitude, is the period when the large-scale target fishery is conducted with midwater trawl gear. Taking whiting with midwater trawl gear is prohibited outside the primary season. However, a per-trip limit is in effect for whiting taken with small footrope and large footrope bottom trawl gear before, during and after the primary season. The per-trip limit was intended to accommodate small bait markets and bycatch in non-whiting fisheries. A per-trip limit of 10,000 lb is in effect for whiting taken with small and large footrope bottom trawl gear, except that a 20,000 lb per-trip limit is in effect prior to the whiting season.

Changes in market demand for whiting have increased the interest in targeting whiting prior to the primary season when the limit is at 20,000 lb. Bycatch of non-whiting species, particularly overfished species and salmon, is a concern if vessels intentionally target whiting during all or part of a fishing trip outside of the primary season using bottom trawls. The GMT believes the 10,000 lb per-trip limit may not provide an incentive to target whiting, while a 20,000 lb limit may. Current GMT projections of overfished species catch as displayed in the attached scorecard do not account for increased whiting effort prior to the primary season. However, the GMT cannot quantify the magnitude of risk for early 2007 as WCGOP data will not be available until late next year (assuming vessels targeting whiting prior to the 2006 primary season were observed). The GMT's ability to accurately project impacts in this fishery is also confounded by the change in fishermen's behavior by targeting whiting outside the primary season.

The GMT did not discuss this issue until late in the week after most of the GAP members had left the meeting. Therefore, if the Council wishes to have more public input on this issue, exploring a reduction in the per-trip limit prior to the primary season could occur in March. However, the Council may want to consider the potential of increased risk of overfished species' bycatch by waiting until March given the increased market demand for whiting.

### **Canary Rockfish Total Catch Projections for 2007**

The GMT further evaluated the canary rockfish impact projections given the proposed management measures for 2007. Following Council guidance and decisions made this week, the GMT removed the exempted fishing permit bycatch caps originally in the 2007 scorecard; maintained the 4.7 mt bycatch cap for 2007 non-treaty whiting fisheries; provided the projected recreational total catches of canary rockfish next year (5.7 mt in combined Washington and Oregon recreational fisheries and 8.3 mt in California recreational catches); and maintained the revised projections of canary rockfish in treaty whiting, salmon troll, California halibut, and research fisheries presented under Agenda Item D.5. Projected total catch of canary rockfish given these adjustments is 43.3 mt or 0.7 mt below the 2007 OY of 44 mt (see attached scorecard).

### **GMT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Take no regulatory action on the 2006 petrale sole fishery and have NMFS request industry to take voluntary action to reduce petrale sole catches if catch rates appear too high in December;
2. Reduce the Period 1 and 6 petrale sole limited entry trawl cumulative limits in 2007 to 50,000 lbs per 2 months to reduce risk of early OY attainment;
3. Restore the originally scheduled 2007 Limited Entry DTL sablefish limits south of 36° N at 350 lbs per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 1,050 lbs;
4. Consider reducing the whiting per-trip limit from 20,000 lb to 10,000 lb for any whiting taken prior to the primary fishery, to reduce whiting targeting incentives outside of the primary season.

PFMC  
11/17/06

**2007 Projected mortality impacts (mt) under current regulations. Final update - November 2006 Council meeting. a/**

11/17/2006 9 a.m.

Fishery	Bocaccio b/	Canary	Cowcod	Dkbl	POP	Widow	Yelloweye
<b>Limited Entry Trawl- Non-whiting</b>	48.0	7.9	2.8	233.1	101.1	0.7	0.1
<b>Limited Entry Trawl- Whiting</b>							
At-sea whiting motherships		4.7		25.0	1.0	200.0	0.0
At-sea whiting cat-proc			2.9		0.0		
Shoreside whiting			1.8		0.0		
Tribal whiting		<b>0.7</b>		0.0	0.6	6.1	0.0
<b>Tribal</b>							
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
<b>Limited Entry Fixed Gear</b>		1.2		1.3	0.4		2.9
Sablefish	13.4		0.0			0.0	
Non-Sablefish			0.1			0.5	
<b>Open Access: Directed Groundfish</b>		3.0					3.0
Sablefish DTL	0.0		0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	
Nearshore (North of 40°10' N. lat.)	0.0			0.0	0.0	0.1	
Nearshore (South of 40°10' N. lat.)	0.0			0.0	0.0		
Other	10.6			0.0	0.0	0.0	
<b>Open Access: Incidental Groundfish</b>							
CA Halibut	0.1	<b>0.0</b>		0.0	0.0		
CA Gillnet c/	0.5			0.0	0.0	0.0	
CA Sheephead c/				0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CPS- wetfish c/	0.3						
CPS- squid d/							
Dungeness crab c/	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0		
HMS b/		0.0	0.0	0.0			
Pacific Halibut c/	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	<b>0.8</b>	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)							
<b>Recreational Groundfish e/</b>							
WA		5.7					6.2
OR						1.4	
CA	98.0		8.3	0.4			
<b>Research: Includes NMFS trawl shelf-slope surveys, the IPHC halibut survey, and expected impacts from SRPs and LOAs. f/</b>							
	2.0	<b>7.5</b>	0.1	3.8	3.6	0.9	2.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	173.3	43.3	3.5	263.5	115.2	258.1	18.6
<b>2007 OY</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Difference</b>	44.7	0.7	0.5	26.6	34.8	110.0	4.4
<b>Percent of OY</b>	79.5%	98.4%	87.5%	90.8%	76.8%	70.1%	80.7%
Key	= either not applicable; trace amount (<0.01 mt); or not reported in available data						

a/ All numbers reflect projected annual total catches except that the non-tribal "Limited Entry Trawl- Whiting" numbers are the total bycatch caps for canary, darkblotched, and widow rockfish.

b/ South of 40°10' N. lat.

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

d/ 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).

e/ Values in scorecard represent projected impacts. However, harvest guidelines for 2007 are as follows: canary in WA and OR combined = 8.2 mt and in CA = 9.0 mt; yelloweye in WA and OR combined = 6.8 mt and in CA = 2.1 mt.

f/ Research projections only updated for canary rockfish in November 2006. The other species' updates will be updated in March 2007.