

CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Council set optimum yield (OY) levels and various management measures for the 2007 groundfish management season with the understanding these management measures will likely need to be adjusted periodically through the biennial management period with the goal of attaining, but not exceeding, the OYs.

The Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) released the 2005 groundfish observer data report (Agenda Item E.2.b, Attachment 1) in late January, which was reviewed by the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) at their January 30-February 1 meeting. These data indicated that bycatch rates for canary rockfish using selective flatfish trawls north of 40°10' N latitude were much higher than anticipated, causing the 2005 canary rockfish OY to be exceeded by 2 mt. It is important to also note that, while the estimated 2006 total catch of canary rockfish has yet to be determined, higher bycatch rates in the north by selective flatfish trawls can be reasonably assumed.

The NWFSC also provided a spatial analysis of 2005 canary rockfish bycatch rates (Agenda Item E.2.b, Attachment 2), which allowed the GMT to consider alternative area closures and rockfish conservation area (RCA) adjustments at a finer spatial scale than north and south of 40°10' N latitude. The GMT developed a range of inseason adjustment options for this year's trawl fishery designed to reduce the canary rockfish impact to levels approximating that originally decided for 2007 using the new bycatch rates (Agenda Item E.5.b, GMT Report). Additionally, the GMT updated all the commercial bycatch models to project species' impacts using these new data at their last meeting and also updated the bycatch scorecard (Agenda Item E.5.b, GMT Report 2).

On February 9, 2007, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued a public notice requesting industry cooperation in reducing this year's trawl catch of petrale sole (Agenda Item E.5.c, NMFS Public Notice). Trawl landings of petrale sole have been proceeding at a higher than anticipated rate due to good weather conditions and low crab fishing effort. NMFS is projecting nearly half of the petrale sole OY may be caught by the end of February at the current catch rate. The Council may want to consider adjustments to the petrale sole limited entry trawl cumulative trip limits and the trawl RCA to prevent early OY attainment.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is also proposing adjustments to Washington recreational fishery RCAs for Council consideration at this meeting (Agenda Item E.5.c, WDFW Report).

The GMT and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) will begin meeting on Monday, March 5, 2007 (see Ancillary A and Ancillary B agendas) to discuss and recommend inseason adjustments to ongoing 2007 groundfish fisheries. Under this agenda item, the Council is to consider advisory body advice and public comment on the status of ongoing fisheries and recommended inseason adjustments prior to adopting final changes.

Council Action:

1. **Consider information on the status of ongoing fisheries.**
2. **Consider and adopt inseason adjustments as necessary.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.5.b, GMT Report: Alternatives for Reducing Canary Rockfish Bycatch in the Limited Entry Non-Whiting Trawl Fishery.
2. Agenda Item E.5.b, GMT Report 2: 2007 Projected Mortality Impacts (mt) Under Current Regulations.
3. Agenda Item E.5.c, NMFS Public Notice: Request for Industry Cooperation in Reducing 2007 Trawl Petrale Sole Catch.
4. Agenda Item E.5.c, WDFW Report: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Report on Groundfish Inseason Management Measures.
5. Agenda Item E.5.e, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Report of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT)
- c. Agency and Tribal Comments
- d. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- e. Public Comment
- f. **Council Action:** Adopt Recommendations for Adjustments to 2007 Fisheries

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PFMC
02/20/07

Alternatives for Reducing Canary Rockfish Bycatch in the Limited Entry Non-Whiting Trawl Fishery

Predictions for the 2007 catch of canary rockfish by the non-whiting limited entry (NWLE) trawl fleet have been updated based on the most recent observer data (2005) . These updated predictions show that the predictions made last fall were too low. In the fall of 2006 the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) predicted a canary rockfish catch level of less than 8 metric tons in this fishery. Based on recently available data from the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program the prediction has been revised upward to approximately 20 metric tons with status quo management measures. Without adjustments to fishery management measures it is projected that canary rockfish catch will exceed the 2007 OY of 44 metric tons.

This document discusses available tools and short term alternatives for restricting the NWLE trawl fleet in order to reduce canary impacts. This document also discusses the need for additional tools for long term management of this fishery. In developing the alternatives, several different approaches and variables were considered to reduce canary rockfish catch in the NWLE trawl fishery. As a result, three sets of alternatives are presented. The initial set of alternatives show the basic actions needed to meet different levels of impacts within the 20 to 8 ton range (Table 1). For purposes of analysis, two sets of sub alternatives have been developed on the assumption that the objective is to limit the NWLE trawl fleet to something on the order of 8 metric tons (the amount assumed to be available to this sector during the development of 2007 management measures) rather than reduce the impacts associated with other fishery sectors. Achievement of this objective is going to affect the ability to trawl in two key areas: the shoreward area between Columbia River and Leadbetter Point and the shoreward area North of Cape Alava. For each of these areas a set of sub alternatives have been developed each of which can move the NWLE trawl fleet, in total, to 8 metric tons with the ability, to some extent, to blend these sub options (Tables 2 and 5).

Available Tools

To achieve canary rockfish catch reductions in the NWLE trawl fishery in the near term, several tools are available that can be implemented as routine measures through an inseason action and these include:

1. Modification of trawl cumulative limits north of 40°10' N. lat., between 40°10' and 38° N. lat., and south of 38° N. lat.
2. Modification of Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundaries
3. The use of management area boundaries to provide more restrictive management measures in portions of the coast, including
 - a. the US/Canada boundary
 - b. the Vancouver/Columbia management area boundary--47°30' N. lat.

- c. the Columbia/Eureka management area boundary--47° N. lat.
 - d. the Eureka/Monterey management area boundary--40°30' N. lat.
 - e. the Monterey/Conception management area boundary--36° N. lat.
 - f. the US/Mexico boundary
4. The use of commonly used geographic coordinates to provide more restrictive management measures in portions of the coast, including
- a. Cape Alava, WA--48°10.00' N. lat.
 - b. Queets River, WA--47°31.70' N. lat.
 - c. Pt. Chehalis, WA--46°53.30' N. lat.
 - d. Leadbetter Point, WA--46°38.17' N. lat.
 - e. Washington/Oregon border--46°16.00' N. lat.
 - f. Cape Falcon, OR--45°46.00' N. lat.
 - g. Cape Lookout, OR--45°20.25' N. lat.
 - h. Cascade Head, OR--45°03.83' N. lat.
 - i. Heceta Head, OR--44°08.30' N. lat.
 - j. Cape Arago, OR--43°20.83' N. lat.
 - k. Cape Blanco, OR--42°50.00' N. lat.
 - l. Humbug Mountain--42°40.50' N. lat.
 - m. Marck Arch, OR--42°13.67' N. lat.
 - n. Oregon/California border--42°00.00' N. lat.
 - o. Cape Mendocino, CA--40°30.00' N. lat.
 - p. North/South management line--40°10.00' N. lat.
 - q. Point Arena, CA--38°57.50' N. lat.
 - r. Point San Pedro, CA--37°35.67' N. lat.
 - s. Pigeon Point, CA--37°11.00' N. lat.
 - t. Ano Nuevo, CA--37°07.00' N. lat.
 - u. Point Lopez, CA--36°00.00' N. lat.

In the longer term, other tools could be developed such as more refined area closures (canary rockfish conservation areas), but implementing such tools would require a more refined analysis of data sources, would need to be developed through the Council's two-meeting process and accompanied by a NEPA analysis, and would be implemented via notice-and-comment rulemaking (See FMP at 6.2.).

Short Term Approaches

The analyses presented here utilize the management tools available for routine measures to show predicted canary rockfish catch levels in the NWLE trawl fishery during the 2007 fishing year. The approach taken in these preliminary analyses was to restrict geographic areas that have the highest bycatch rate of canary rockfish first. The alternatives analyzed had more restrictive shoreward RCA boundaries in areas where the bycatch rate of canary rockfish was highest, identified by the available areas listed in bullets 3 and 4 above, and the analysis of the most recently available observer data. These analyses are provided for informational purposes and that further deliberation on canary rockfish bycatch reduction measures will occur at the March meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Based on analysis of the most recently available observer data, the areas with the highest bycatch rate of canary rockfish are: 1) that area shoreward of the trawl RCA north of Cape Alava to the US/Canada boundary, 2) that area shoreward of the trawl RCA between Leadbetter Point and the

Columbia River and, 3) that area shoreward of the trawl RCA between Cape Arago and Humbug Mountain. The following map shows those 3 areas next to the state of Oregon, Washington, and the 75 fathom RCA boundary. The reader is referred to the Northwest Fisheries Science Center reports for further information on canary rockfish catch levels and area-specific bycatch (see Agenda Items E.2.b, Attachments 1 and 2).

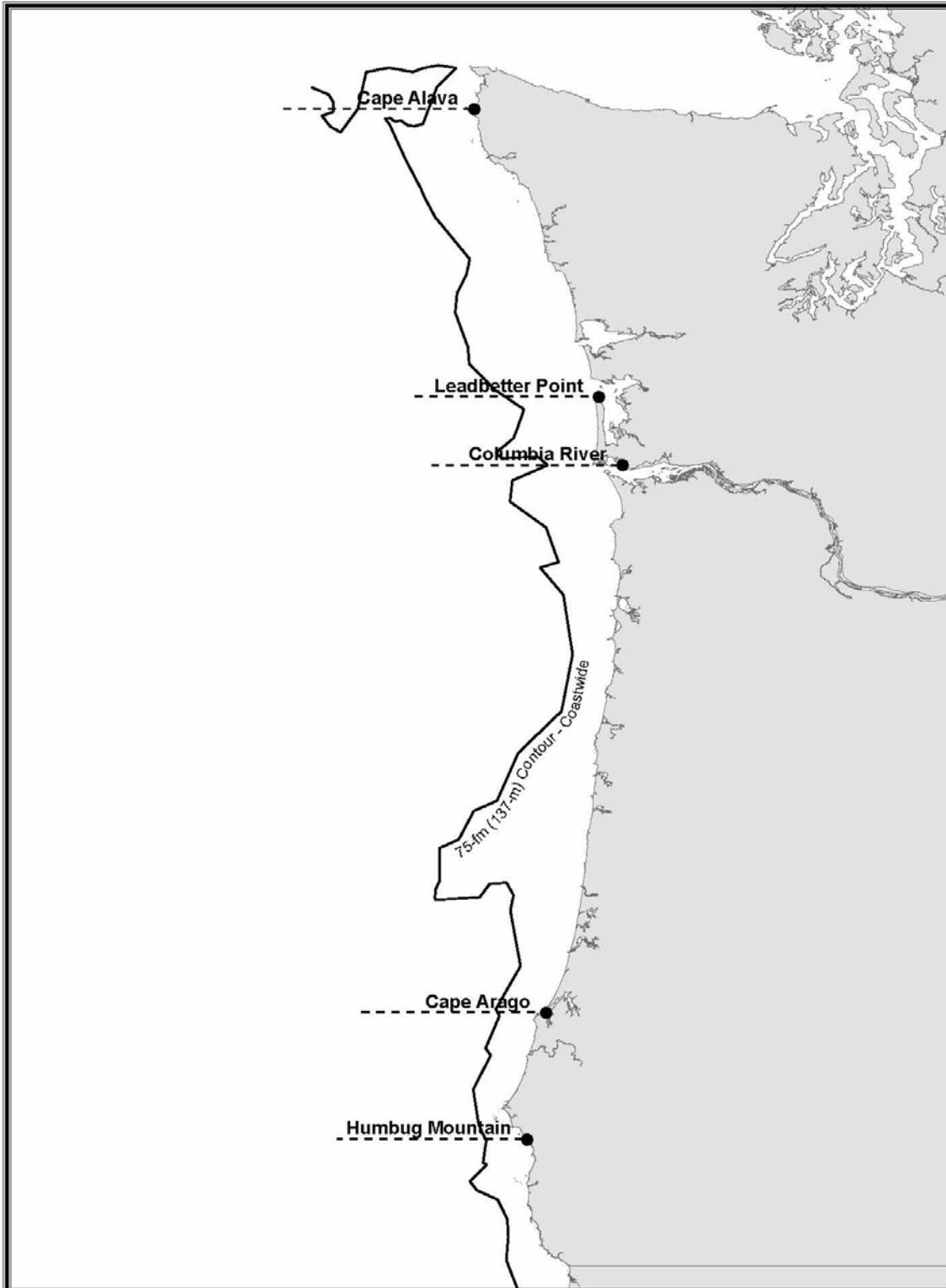


Figure 1 Geographic Areas Used in Analyses

Alternatives that Show Differing Levels of Canary Impacts

Using currently specified trawl cumulative limits, several scenarios were generated showing the impact of restricting areas with the highest canary bycatch. The following table displays the result of those scenarios by showing the predicted catch of canary rockfish as 1) the shoreward RCA boundary is moved to 75 fathom all year in the north, and, 2) the above three specified areas are closed to trawling shoreward of the trawl RCA. Each alternative is cumulative in that the second alternative closes shoreward of the RCA north of Cape Alava, the third alternative closes shoreward of the RCA north of Cape Alava and between Cape Arago and Humbug Mountain, and the fourth alternative closes shoreward of the RCA north of Cape Alava, between Cape Arago and Humbug Mountain, and between Leadbetter Point and the Columbia river.

Table 1 Predicted Canary Catch in the Non-Whiting Trawl Fishery by Alternative
(Alternatives restrict areas shoreward of the trawl RCA)

Alternative	Description	Canary Impacts (mt)
SQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Change- 75 fm shoreward RCA boundary all year in north except 100 fm shoreward RCA boundary in period 4 	20.0
ALT 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 fm shoreward RCA boundary all year in north 	18.0
ALT 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 fm in north Close shoreward of RCA north of Cape Alava 	13.4
ALT 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 fm in north Close shoreward of RCA north of Cape Alava Close shoreward of RCA between Mt. Humbug and Cape Arago 	10.9
ALT 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 fm in north Close shoreward of RCA north of Cape Alava Close shoreward of RCA between Mt. Humbug and Cape Arago Close shoreward of RCA between Leadbetter Pt. and Col. R. 	8.0

Alternatives that Allow Trawling Shoreward of the RCA between Leadbetter Point and Columbia River

Further analysis of available observer data shows that by keeping that area between Leadbetter Point and the Columbia River open during the winter months, the aggregate bycatch rate of canary rockfish in the north actually declines. This is because observer data shows the ratio of canary to target species catch in the winter months decreases in that area. Further information from LE trawl logbooks shows that the Columbia-Leadbetter area is an economically important area to the Astoria port group. Based on this information, three additional alternatives were constructed that modify the shoreward RCA boundary between Leadbetter Point and the

Columbia River during certain times of the year. Alternative LC.1 closes that area shoreward of the RCA between Leadbetter Point and the Columbia River in the summer (May through August). Alternative LC.2 restricts the shoreward RCA boundary to 60 fathoms between Leadbetter Point and the Columbia River in the summer. Alternative LC.3 keeps the Leadbetter Point to Columbia River area open to 60 fathoms during the summer but modifies cumulative limits in the north to keep canary rockfish impacts to 8 metric tons.

Table 2 Predicted Canary Catch in the Non-Whiting Trawl Fishery for Alternatives that Allow Some Fishing between Columbia River and Leadbetter Point
(Alternatives restrict areas shoreward of the trawl RCA)

Alternative	Description	Canary Impacts (mt)
ALT LC.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoreward RCA boundary at 75 fm in the north (1) • Close Shoreward of the RCA north of Cape Alava • Close Shoreward of the RCA between Humbug and Arago • Close Shoreward of the RCA between Leadbetter and Col R in summer 	7.9
ALT LC.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoreward RCA boundary at 75 fm in the north • Close Shoreward of the RCA north of Cape Alava • Close Shoreward of the RCA between Humbug and Arago • Restrict the Shoreward RCA boundary to 60 fm between Leadbetter and Col R in summer 	8.4
ALT LC.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoreward RCA boundary at 75 fm in the north • Close Shoreward of the RCA north of Cape Alava • Close Shoreward of the RCA between Humbug and Arago • Restrict Shoreward RCA boundary to 60 fm between Leadbetter and Col R in summer • Modify Cumulative Limits 	8.0

The following tables show the trawl cumulative limits that would be in place in the north with alternatives LC.1, LC.2, and LC.3.

Table 3 Cumulative Limits for Alternatives LC.1 and LC.2

Area/Gear	Period	Cumulative Limits								
		Sablefish	Longspn	Shortspn	Dover	Other Flat	Petrals	Arrow'th	Slope Rock	
North 40 10 Large Footrope	1	13,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	50,000	100,000	4,000	
	2	13,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000	
	3	15,000	22,000	7,500	60,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000	
	4	15,000	22,000	7,500	60,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000	
	5	15,000	22,000	7,500	60,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000	
	6	13,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	50,000	100,000	4,000	
North 40 10 SFFT	1	5,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	16,000	90,000	4,000	
	2	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	25,000	90,000	4,000	
	3	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	25,000	90,000	4,000	
	4	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	25,000	90,000	4,000	
	5	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	25,000	90,000	4,000	
	6	5,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	16,000	90,000	4,000	

Table 4 Cumulative Limits for Alternative LC.3

SUBAREA	PERIOD	CUMULATIVE LIMITS BY PERIOD								
		Sablefish	Longspn	Shortspn	Dover	Other Flat	Petrals	Arrow'th	Slope Rock	
North 40 10 Large	1	13,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	50,000	100,000	4,000	
	2	13,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000	
	3	15,000	22,000	7,500	60,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000	
	4	15,000	22,000	7,500	60,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000	
	5	15,000	22,000	7,500	60,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000	
	6	13,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	50,000	100,000	4,000	
North 40 10 SFFT	1	5,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	16,000	90,000	4,000	
	2	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	25,000	90,000	4,000	
	3	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	60,000	20,000	40,000	4,000	
	4	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	60,000	20,000	40,000	4,000	
	5	8,000	3,000	3,000	30,000	60,000	20,000	40,000	4,000	
	6	5,000	3,000	3,000	30,000	60,000	16,000	40,000	4,000	

Alternatives that Allow Trawling Shoreward of the RCA North of Cape Alava

The Groundfish Management Team discussed the above analyses and paid particular attention to economic impacts that would occur to vessels operating in the area north of Cape Alava. Trawl logbook data shows that substantial trawl effort and catch occurs in this area and this area is important to both the Oregon and Washington trawl fleet. Based on GMT discussion, input from industry representatives, and available data sources, it was largely determined that closing the shoreward area north of Cape Alava would have a disproportionate impact on the northern Washington trawl fleet based out of Bellingham, Blaine, and Neah Bay (2006 fish ticket data indicate 10 vessels made NWLE trawl deliveries to ports in this area). Logbook data shows that this area is the most intensely fished area of vessels that homeport in those locations. Because of these impacts, additional analyses were requested with the intention of exploring possibilities that would allow for some fishing opportunity in the shoreward area north of Cape Alava. The approach taken to explore fishing opportunity in this area was to craft management measures that would consciously push large trawl vessels in the north to areas seaward of the RCA and thus reduce canary impacts because of less effort and catch occurring in the shoreward areas. Shoreward fishing opportunity would be modified to allow trawling in the area north of Cape Alava without leading to excessive canary rockfish bycatch.

The first alternative (A.1) explored a wholesale change to the seaward RCA boundary for periods 3, 4, and 5 to allow more fishing opportunity in the deep areas and to get effort to move out of the shoreward area. Alternative A.1 restricted that shoreward area between Columbia River and Leadbetter Point, and that shoreward area between Cape Arago and Mt. Humbug. The shoreward area north of Cape Alava was closed in the summer months, but open to 75 fathoms in the winter. This alternative was constructed with the idea that northern Washington trawlers

could travel to areas south of Cape Alava during the summer when weather was more favorable, but would be allowed to fish closer to port in the winter during harsher weather conditions.

Alternative A.2 mirrors alternative A.1, but cumulative limits are adjusted in the north to bring the canary rockfish impacts down from 9.5 to 8.2 metric tons.

Other options were explored, including the possibility of establishing a 60 fathom shoreward RCA line and a 50 fathom shoreward RCA line north of Cape Alava. Available information showed that while canary catch decreases in the shallower areas, target catch decreases more rapidly, meaning the bycatch rate is higher at shallower depths in this area compared to the bycatch rate at 75 fathoms. Additionally, trawling is prohibited in Washington within 3 miles from shore, substantially limiting the available fishing area shoreward of a 60 or 50 fathom line. Based on this information, alternatives that considered RCA boundaries shallower than 75 fathoms in the area north of Cape Alava were not further considered.

Table 5 Predicted Canary Catch in the Non-Whiting Trawl Fishery for Alternatives that Allow Some Fishing North of Cape Alava (alternatives restrict areas shoreward of the trawl RCA)

Alternative	Description	Canary Impact (mt)
Alt A.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move shoreward boundary to 75 fm in north all year • move seaward boundary to 180 fm in the north in period 3, 4, and 5 • close shoreward of RCA between Cape Arago and Mt. Humbug • close shoreward of RCA between Col R and Leadbetter in summer (open in winter) • close shoreward of RCA north of Cape Alava in summer (open in winter) 	9.5
Alt A.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move shoreward boundary to 75 fm in north all year • move seaward boundary to 180 in the north during period 3, 4, and 5 • close shoreward of RCA between Cape Arago and Mt. Humbug • close shoreward of RCA between Col R and Leadbetter in summer (open in winter) • close shoreward of RCA north of Cape Alava in summer (open in winter) • adjust shoreward cumulative limits in the north 	8.2

Table 6 SFFT Cumulative Limits for Alternative A.2

Area/Gear	Period	CUMULATIVE LIMITS BY PERIOD							
		Sablefish	Longspn	Shortspn	Dover	Other flat	Petrals	Arrowtth	Slope Rock
North of 40 10 SFFT Limits	1	5,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	16,000	90,000	4,000
	2	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	25,000	90,000	4,000
	3	6,000	3,000	3,000	25,000	30,000	15,000	30,000	4,000
	4	6,000	3,000	3,000	25,000	30,000	15,000	30,000	4,000
	5	6,000	3,000	3,000	25,000	30,000	15,000	30,000	4,000
	6	5,000	3,000	3,000	25,000	30,000	15,000	30,000	4,000

Long Term Canary Rockfish Bycatch Approaches

The GMT discussed several tools for managing canary rockfish bycatch in the longer term. These tools would be used to achieve the necessary reductions in canary rockfish bycatch, but would presumably alleviate some of the constraints placed on the industry from any of the above alternatives. It is important to point out that more refined tools for dealing with canary rockfish bycatch are likely to require an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), require a more refined analysis of data sources, would need to be developed through the Council's two-meeting process and accompanied by a NEPA analysis, and implemented via notice-and-comment rulemaking (see FMP at §6.2). Some of these ideas include but are not limited to:

1. Development of more refined area closures (canary rockfish conservation areas).
2. Conducting an EFP to test trawl gears off northern Washington that differ from the selective flatfish trawl.
3. Conducting an EFP to test the effectiveness and impacts of allowing adversely impacted trawlers to use pot/trap gear while fishing in areas closed to trawling.

The GMT also recognizes that higher bycatch rates in some areas could reflect historical patterns of fishery exploitation, and that focusing effort on select areas could potentially have population impacts over smaller spatial scales as well as potentially bias the ability to assess canary rockfish fishing mortality by reflecting age or length compositions from the more heavily exploited segment of the population. Similar concerns have already been raised with respect to existing area closures, and such concerns speak to the increasing need to consider both population structure and management measures over finer spatial scales.

2007 Projected mortality impacts (mt) under current regulations. January 2007 update. a/

1/31/2007

Fishery	Bocaccio b/	Canary	Cowcod	Dkbl	POP	Widow	Yelloweye
Limited Entry Trawl- Non-whiting	47.9	20.0	2.1	194.3	71.6	0.7	0.1
Limited Entry Trawl- Whiting							
At-sea whiting motherships					1.0		0.0
At-sea whiting cat-proc		4.0		25.0	2.9	220.0	0.0
Shoreside whiting					1.8		0.0
Tribal whiting		0.7		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		1.2		1.3	0.4		2.9
Sablefish	13.4		0.0			0.0	
Non-Sablefish			0.1			0.5	
Open Access: Directed Groundfish		1.0					
Sablefish DTL	0.0		0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.5
Nearshore (North of 40°10' N. lat.)	0.0	1.8		0.0	0.0	0.1	2.0
Nearshore (South of 40°10' N. lat.)	0.0			0.0	0.0		
Other	10.6			0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Open Access: Incidental Groundfish							
CA Halibut	0.1	0.0		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	0.8	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 e/							
WA		5.7					6.2
OR						1.4	
CA	98.0		8.3	0.4			8.0
Research: Includes NMFS trawl shelf-slope surveys, the IPHC halibut survey, and expected impacts from SRPs and LOAs. f/							
	2.0	7.5	0.1	3.8	3.6	0.9	2.0
TOTAL	173.2	54.5	2.8	224.7	85.7	278.1	18.2
2007 OY	218	44.0	4.0	290	150	368	23
Difference	44.8	-10.5	1.2	65.4	64.3	90.0	4.8
Percent of OY	79.4%	123.9%	70.0%	77.5%	57.1%	75.6%	79.0%
Key		= either not applicable; trace amount (<0.01 mt); or not reported in available					

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. Only cells in bold font borders have been updated.

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.



National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Region
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PUBLIC NOTICE

For Information Contact:
The Groundfish Branch (206) 526-6140

NMFS-SEA-07-01
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 9, 2007

PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY REQUEST FOR INDUSTRY COOPERATION IN REDUCING 2007 TRAWL PETRALE SOLE CATCH

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) estimates that 2007 petrale sole catch is proceeding at a higher than anticipated rate. As of February 2, 2007, the estimated 2007 petrale sole catch is 600 metric tons (mt.) Favorable weather, a reduced Dungeness crab season, and aggregation of the petrale sole stock has contributed to higher than anticipated catch levels, and available information shows that it is likely the catch of petrale sole in February 2007 will be equivalent to that of January 2007. By the end of February, the catch of petrale sole could be 1,200 mt out of a coastwide optimum yield (OY) of 2,499. If that level of petrale catch occurs, it will likely lead to reductions for the summer petrale fishery and a possible elimination of petrale sole fishing opportunities in November-December 2007.

A summer and November-December petrale fishery may still be able to be held if the catch of petrale sole in the bottom trawl fishery is voluntarily reduced in February. Analysis of available information shows that a February 2007 catch level of 200-300 mt of petrale sole may still allow for enough management flexibility to prosecute a summer petrale fishery and would leave some opportunity for November-December petrale fishery.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council has expressed its desire to have petrale sole fishing opportunities throughout the 2007 calendar year. Therefore the National Marine Fisheries Service is requesting that the industry voluntarily reduce its catches of petrale sole during the month of February.

Visit the NMFS Northwest Region website for current groundfish management regulations, VMS information, and RCA boundary coordinates.

<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Groundfish-Halibut/index.cfm>

Groundfish E-mail Group

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WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
REPORT ON GROUND FISH IN SEASON MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Based on the 2006 harvest estimates for the Washington recreational fishery, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is proposing inseason adjustments to the Washington recreational rockfish conservation areas (RCAs) in 2007 and 2008. Specifically, WDFW is proposing that the recreational RCAs (i.e., depth restrictions) that were in effect in 2006 remain in effect in 2007 and 2008.

Washington and Oregon share recreational harvest guidelines for canary and yelloweye rockfish. In 2006, the Washington portion of the shared canary rockfish harvest guideline was 1.7 mt and its portion of the shared yelloweye harvest guideline was 3.5 mt. These total catch amounts or harvest targets, if projected to be attained inseason by the Washington recreational fishery, were the triggers to consult with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and consider an inseason action to slow or eliminate further canary or yelloweye rockfish mortality in this fishery. In 2005, WDFW projected that the yelloweye harvest target would be attained prematurely prompting such a consultation. That consultation indicated the shared yelloweye harvest guideline would be attained early, resulting in a WDFW action implemented on August 5 to close the recreational groundfish fishery outside of 30 fm in waters off Washington north of Leadbetter Pt. at 46°38'10" N latitude. The Council and NMFS adopted conforming federal regulations that were implemented on October 1, 2005.

New Washington recreational management measures were adopted for 2006 to avoid early canary and yelloweye rockfish harvest guideline attainment. To reduce the catch of yelloweye rockfish to stay within the Washington recreational harvest target, WDFW proposed, and the Council adopted, the following modifications to the 2006 Washington recreational fishery:

- Prohibit retention of rockfish and lingcod seaward of a line approximating the 20 fm depth contour from May 22, 2006, through September 30, 2006, in Marine Areas 3 and 4 (waters off Washington north of the Queets River at 47°31'42" N latitude where canary and yelloweye catches are highest), except on days that halibut fishing is open (which is approximately 5 days in May, and 2 days in June).
- Prohibit retention of rockfish and lingcod seaward of a line approximating the 30 fm depth contour from March 18, 2006, through June 15, 2006, in Marine Area 2 (waters off Washington between Leadbetter Pt. and the Queets River).

Through the biennial specifications process, using harvest data through 2005, WDFW staff projected the amount of canary and yelloweye rockfish that would be harvested in the Washington recreational fishery under the regulations listed above, and identified additional restrictions that could be in place (i.e., extending the time period for these depth restrictions), if needed. However, with the depth restrictions described above, the Washington recreational fishery stayed under its harvest targets, harvesting 1.28 mt of canary and 1.70 mt of yelloweye rockfish. As noted in the 2007-08 Groundfish Specifications Environmental Impact Statement, these additional restrictions would adversely impact Washington's coastal communities that are heavily reliant upon recreational groundfish fishing opportunity. Therefore, WDFW is requesting that the Washington recreational RCAs be modified as described in Attachment 1.

Washington Recreational Regulations

Recreational Groundfish Conservation Areas off Washington

Recreational RCA

Between the U.S. border with Canada and the Queets River, recreational fishing for groundfish is prohibited seaward of a boundary line approximating the 20-fm (37-m) depth contour from May 1- ~~21~~ through September 30, except on days when the Pacific halibut fishery is open in this area....

Between the Queets River and Leadbetter Point, recreational fishing for groundfish is prohibited seaward of a boundary line approximating the 30-fm (55-m) depth contour from March 17, 2007, through ~~July 31~~ **June 15**, 2007, except that recreational fishing for sablefish and Pacific cod is permitted within the recreational RCA from May 1 through June 15. In 2008, recreational fishing for groundfish is prohibited seaward of a boundary line approximating the 30-fm (55-m) depth contour from March 15, 2008, through ~~July 31~~ **June 15**, 2008, except that recreational fishing for sablefish and Pacific cod is permitted within the recreational RCA from May 1 through June 15....

Josh Churchman
Box 5 Ocean Parkway
Bolinas, CA 94924

February 14, 2007

Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in regards to the 2007 regulations for shelf rockfish in the fixed gear fishery. After reviewing the allocations, I have noticed once again that Central California's allocation is drastically less than that of Northern and Southern California. I would like to request an in-season adjustment to fix what appears to be an arbitrary penalty to one district in favor of another.

As you can see from the current regulations, Southern California is allowed three thousand pounds of minor shelf rockfish for each two month period while Central California is allowed primarily two thousand pounds of only chilipepper. The fish stocks are rebuilding rapidly in both these regions and widows, bocaccio, and chilipepper all swim together. When I fish for chilipepper, both widows and bocaccio are hooked and come to the surface dead. The result of the Central region being restricted to primarily chilipepper has been increased and un-acceptable discard of both widows and bocaccio. If Central California had a minor shelf allocation similar to the Southern region, my discard rates would drop to near zero. I have fished hook and line in the region for over thirty years and never had to discard fish prior to these regulations. Over the past seven years, my discard rates have approached fifty percent. I often stop fishing before I meet my quota because I am disgusted by the amount of discard. The current regulations maximize discard for all shelf rockfish in the Central district while minimizing discard in the Southern district.

I also noticed that the 2007 regulations for Central California increased the trawl sector's allocation to 44,000 pounds of chilipepper annually while fixed gear remained stagnant at 12,000 pounds. What is the science justifying this discrepancy? My understanding is that there are only two active fixed gear permits in the central California District landing shelf rockfish. Therefore, the regulations I have been discussing in this letter really only effect two vessels. I understand the need to regulate the fishery during the rebuild; however given the increased allocation for the trawl sector, along with the increased discard of widows and bocaccio, I am left wondering why the regulations are so restrictive for the two remaining fixed gear permits in Central California. Even a small increase and broadening of the fixed gear allocation would not result in a significant change in the rebuilding plan. The result would be reduced discard and creating a more sustainable fishery for the remaining permit holders.

As I mentioned at the start of this letter, I would like an in-season adjustment for minor shelf rockfish for fixed gear in Central California. I would like the Central region to have an allocation that combines widows, chilipeppers, and bocaccio at levels reflecting equity between sectors and regions. A change in the regulations would minimize discard in the fixed gear fishery and create a more sustainable future for the few of us who remain here in central California.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Josh Churchman

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