

## **CDFG Proposed Inseason Action Regarding California Recreational Groundfish Regulations**

### **Issue:**

CDFG staff reviewed CRFS estimates available through June 2007 and projected total mortalities through the end of the year. Current projections are higher than past projections developed in 2006. Under the existing regulations, California's recreational catch for 2007 is projected to exceed harvest guidelines for both yelloweye and canary rockfish (Table 1). California has developed in season management options designed to reduce the catch projections which would affect the take of rockfish, cabezon, greenlings, lingcod and associated state-managed species and would only apply to boat-based anglers.

**Reason for Increased Projections:** Several factors have contributed to the higher projections observed. During the 2007-2008 specification process, California used the 2004 and 2005 CRFS data to calculate final projections for the current season structure. Since then, several modifications have been made to the CRFS catch and effort estimation methodologies to improve the accuracy of estimates, although so far they have only been applied to 2005 and 2006 data. The current 2007 inseason catch projections use the revised 2005 and 2006 data, and 2006 catch estimates are higher than the 2004 data originally used, resulting in higher projections. (The RecFIN technical committee has discussed these modifications to the estimation methodologies and they are documented in California's latest six-month report of recreational program changes.)

The preliminary CRFS catch estimates for yelloweye and canary rockfish were higher than projected. This may have resulted from increased fishing activity on bottom fish due to poor salmon catches. Greater catches occurred in July 2007 for yelloweye and canary rockfish in the Northern Management Region and Shelter Cove in the North Central Management Region. The CRFS catch estimates for July were higher than projected, which resulted in an increase catch projection for these regions. In agreement with the GMT, the CDFG applied an adjustment to the August and September catch projections. The adjustment is proportional to the July under-projection was applied to August and September catch projections for these regions in anticipation of continued under projection of catch. The proportional increase was made to the North-Central Management Region for August and September catch projections. The Northern Management Region catch projections were increased for August only due to an anticipated decrease in effort due to the September 4, 2007 salmon closure. Catch projections for all other management regions will not be effected. The adjustment increased the California statewide projected catch estimate for yelloweye rockfish from 4.9 mt to 7.2 mt.

Although progress has been made towards implementing a discard mortality estimate methodology that is the same as that used by Oregon and Washington, there are still several outstanding issues that could not be resolved in time for the September Council meeting. Consequently, discard mortality was estimated in the same manner as that reviewed by the GMT at the November 2006 Council meeting.

**Possible Inseason Management Options:**

CDFG analyzed various management options to determine the best possible strategy for achieving savings while providing the most fishing opportunity. Because of the reduced impacts to canary and yelloweye rockfish in the management regions south of Pigeon Point (San Mateo County), CDFG is considering any proposed actions to be limited to the area from Pigeon Point to the Oregon border. Decreasing available fishing depth from 30 fm to 20 fms from Pt. Conception to the CA-OR border did not result in appreciable catch savings (see Table 1). The option that achieves the greatest savings would close the North and North-Central Groundfish Management Areas (37 deg 11' north latitude to 42 deg. 00' north latitude) on October 1 for the remainder of the year. The proposed action projects catch of canary rockfish within the CA recreational HG (94% HG), and minimizes overages for the CA recreational HG of yelloweye rockfish (129% of HG; see table 1). This option would reduce fishing opportunities in the North Management Region by 3 months and the North Central Management Region by 2 months and have adverse effects in that area on the CPFV fleet and other recreational anglers planning to fish for bottomfish. Any proposed actions would also apply to lingcod, and associated state-managed species including California sheephead, ocean whitefish (although few are encountered in those areas), and greenlings (*Hexagrammous* spp.) not under federal management.

The GMT will review these projected impacts along with their review of the updated September scorecard and will consider the outcome of proposed management actions relative to the projected catch for all sectors. Following Council action in federal waters, California will then adopt conforming action for state waters. Groundfish staff will continue to track CRFS catch estimations and compare these against catch projections to evaluate whether the catch of these species is proceeding as projected. Any further concerns or more positive information regarding the status of the fishery will be conveyed when appropriate.

**Table 1: Management Option Outcome Matrix**

Action	Species	Projected Catch (mt)	2007 Harvest Guideline (mt)	Outcome: Tons Over CA HG (%HG)
<b>Status Quo</b>	Yelloweye rf	8.3	2.1	6.2 mt (395%)
	Canary rf	12.3	9	3.3 mt (137%)
<b>Close North and North Central Management Regions Oct. 1</b>	Yelloweye rf	7.2	2.1	5.1 mt (343%)
	Canary rf	10.3	9	1.3 mt (114%)