Application to the Pacific Fishery Management Council for an Exempted Fishing Permit to collect biological information from yelloweye rockfish encountered in the Oregon sport charter fishery.

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6/18/2009

Applicants
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Marine Resources Program
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Statement of purpose and goals
The purpose of this EFP is to improve the quantitative assessment of U.S. west coast yelloweye rockfish stocks by collecting biological information such as length, weight, age, sex, and maturity from yelloweye rockfish encountered in Oregon's recreational groundfish fishery. This will be achieved by allowing a select group of Oregon charter vessels to retain a limited number of yelloweye rockfish while conducting groundfish trips under the current regulatory structure. The retained yelloweye rockfish will be surrendered to an ODFW biologist at the point of landing for biological sampling. Yelloweye rockfish will be donated to food share programs after data collection whenever possible.

If the project is successful, data collections maybe expanded to include samples from the commercial nearshore fishery.

Justification for EFP
Bycatch of overfished yelloweye rockfish currently constrains utilization of healthy groundfish stocks in many U.S. west coast fisheries, including recreational, commercial fixed gear, and shelf trawl fisheries. As yelloweye rockfish catch limits are projected to decrease over the next several years to meet rebuilding goals, additional constraints in these and other fisheries are anticipated. Retention of yelloweye rockfish has been prohibited in most fisheries since 2004, which has extremely limited the catch-at-age data available for this important species. Considering the lack of any fishery independent survey that is adequate for indexing the abundance or describing the age distribution of this species, it may be very difficult to detect stock rebuilding if and when it does occur. Novel methods of data collection are needed to address the wholesale lack of recent data informing age structured stock assessments of yelloweye rockfish. While we recognize that the data collected under this EFP will represent only part of the geographic and depth

range of the species, we will attempt to design this project to adequately describe the age distribution of yelloweye rockfish encountered in Oregon's recreational groundfish fishery. Consultations with NMFS stock assessment scientists familiar with yelloweye rockfish indicated that even limited catch-at-age data may be valuable for detecting population trends considering the current lack of data.

Broader significance and fleetwide applicability

Fleetwide application may be unnecessary if precise and unbiased information can be obtained using a select group of vessels. However, this data collection method could be expanded to other States and fishing fleets if the information proves valuable in assessing the status of yelloweye rockfish.

Number of vessels covered under this EFP

No more than 15 vessels would be invited to participate under this EFP in the first year. This number of vessels was selected to allow participation of 2-3 vessels in each major recreational fishing port or port group on the Oregon coast, with the goal of providing geographic coverage of the major recreational groundfish fishing grounds inside of the 40 fathom regulatory closure.

Description of species and amounts

Vessels fishing under this EFP will target black rockfish and lingcod, and are likely to have incidental catches of blue, canary, china, copper, quillback, yellowtail, vermilion, and other nearshore rockfishes, cabezon, and kelp greenling. Catch per angler statistics from Oregon charter vessel observer data indicate 125-150 trips will be needed to achieve the sampling goal of 100 yelloweye. Since vessels fishing under this EFP will be subject to all concurrent regulations except for the prohibition of retention of yelloweye rockfish, catches of all other species will be estimated by standard creel surveys and counted against the appropriate state or federal harvest caps. Projected catches of these species are provided for reference (Table 1). Because yelloweye rockfish landed under this EFP would presumably have been encountered and released in the absence of the EFP, we estimate the EFP impacts to yelloweye rockfish as the additional mortality resulting from retaining (100% mortality rate) rather than releasing (64% mortality rate) the fish and use this as the overfished species bycatch cap.

Table 1. Estimated catch and increased mortality over status quo by species for 150 EFP trips.

Species	Est. catch (mt)	Est. increased mortality (mt)
Black rockfish	8.30	0.00
Blue rockfish	1.03	0.00
Cabezon	0.57	0.00
Canary rockfish	0.27	0.00
China rockfish	0.11	0.00
Copper rockfish	0.15	0.00
Kelp Greenling	0.13	0.00
Lingcod	3.45	0.00
Quillback rockfish	0.18	0.00
Vermilion rockfish	0.30	0.00

Species	Est. catch (mt)	Est. increased mortality (mt)
Widow rockfish	0.02	0.00
Yelloweye rockfish	**0.18**	**0.06**
Yellowtail rockfish	0.56	0.00

Duration, location, and gear

Duration

The EFP will take place between April 1 and September 30, 2010. This time frame includes the vast majority of recreational fishing activity, and is commensurate with the implementation of the annual recreational groundfish fishery closure in waters deeper than 40 fathoms. If the approach is found to be successful for the purpose of informing assessments of the status of yelloweye rockfish, we would likely seek renewal until such time as retention is allowed in the fishery and catch-at-age data can be obtained through standard creel surveys.

Location

The EFP will take place in ocean waters off the coast of Oregon out to the 40 fathom regulatory closure line.

Gear

No modification of fishing gear is contemplated under this EFP. Captains and crew will be instructed to use the same gear as they would for any other similar fishing trip.

Criteria for vessel selection

Vessels will be hand picked by applicants, focusing on vessels and captains with a history of cooperation with existing sampling programs, substantial historical participation in the sport groundfish fishery, and no groundfish prohibited species related violations within the past 5 years. Vessels will be selected to provide the greatest geographic coverage possible by selecting 2 or 3 vessels from each major recreational fishing port or port group on the Oregon coast. If more than the desired number of vessels from a single port qualifies under these criteria, applicants will use their personal knowledge of the fleet and operators to make vessel selections most likely to result in a successful project.

Monitoring

Vessels fishing under this EFP will be observed at the point of landing by an ODFW sampler dedicated to this project. Vessels will notify the sampler of their estimated time and location of landing when they have yelloweye rockfish on-board, and the sampler will make every effort to arrive at that location prior to the vessel. Upon arrival of the vessel, all yelloweye rockfish will be immediately surrendered in a whole and intact condition to the sampler. In the event that the sampler cannot arrive at the point of landing prior to the vessel, the EFP will require that all yelloweye rockfish be held on-board the vessel until such time as the fish can be surrendered directly to appropriate ODFW or Oregon State Police (OSP) personnel. If yelloweye rockfish are removed from an EFP vessel without ODFW or OSP personnel present, the responsible party will be considered in violation of the EFP and subject to all applicable laws governing prohibited species catches. Catch of all other species will be accounted for under ODFW's standard catch accounting programs.

Data collection and analysis
Biological data such as length, weight, age, sex, and maturity status will be collected by the dedicated ODFW sampler after transporting specimens to the Newport lab. For each retained yelloweye rockfish, captains of participating vessels will provide a unique mark and record the depth and area of capture. Initial data analysis will be conducted by applicants and will consist of point estimates with 95% CI of the proportion of recreational catch in each age class using an area and/or depth weighted approach, and an assessment of how well the selected vessels represent the spatial and temporal characteristics of the recreational fleet as a whole. Final analysis and evaluation of the project will occur in the context of the next yelloweye rockfish stock assessment and should include participation and feedback from the stock assessment team. The project will be considered successful if the stock assessment team finds the data useful in their analysis of stock status.

Report preparation
An initial report authored by the applicants will be drafted following the completion of sampling during the 2010 fishing season. This report will focus on the success of the EFP in meeting the goal of collecting biological samples from 100 yelloweye rockfish from Oregon's sport groundfish fishery, and provide summary statistics including sample sizes for all data types, age and size distribution of the sample, and estimated age and size distribution of yelloweye rockfish encountered in the sport groundfish fishery. We expect the initial report could be completed by the June, 2011 Council meeting. A secondary reporting mechanism will be the first yelloweye stock assessment following the EFP, in which we expect the utility of this data for assessing stock status to be reported.

Signatures

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