

## GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON MID-WATER RECREATIONAL FISHING REGULATIONS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received reports from Ms. Joanna Grebel, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW); Mr. Craig Heberer, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Ms. Lynn Mattes and Mr. Patrick Mirick, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), about the proposed midwater sport fishery.

After listening to the presentations, the GAP discussion concentrated on the socio-economic analysis of the fishery, whether the fishery was appropriate for both Oregon and California or for just Oregon, and whether it should be included in just one recreational sector (charter vessel or private boat) at first, to be expanded later, or both.

While the GAP understands some of the issues presented by both CDFW and NMFS, we believe the benefits of the fishery outweigh the risks, especially in Oregon. In California, analyzing a range of options could provide opportunity for implementation at a future date, especially as other sport fisheries such as salmon may be at risk as the drought continues or warmer water moves north.

In this respect, the long leader fishery could provide a safety valve, of sorts. The long leader fishery could have zero economic impact, if there is no participation, or a profound impact by providing a safe haven for all recreational fisheries if, for example, nearshore sport fisheries, salmon seasons and sport halibut seasons collapse. Yellowtail rockfish remains abundant and the long leader fishery has proven it has low bycatch and is a clean fishery. In a worst-case scenario, it could remain the only fishery left to sport fishermen in Oregon and parts of California.

Therefore, the GAP suggests the following for analysis:

### For Oregon:

1. A one-month season in April
2. A three-month season, in any months between April and October 1
3. Open all six months, April-October 1
4. Rolling openers of every other two weeks, April-October 1

### For California:

1. Open one week only
2. Open one month only in the fall
3. North of Pt. Conception only
4. North of 40° 10' N. latitude only

The above range of alternatives would not change any nearshore fishing regulations but would complement them.

In Oregon, it's clear that this would have a socio-economic benefit, as identified in H.1.a, ODFW Report, by providing a potential 25,000-50,000 angler trips per year. This could completely absorb the number of salmon trips, should that fishery be shortened or closed for any reason. It makes sense that similar benefits could be seen in California, especially north of 40° 10' N. latitude, where fish stocks and angler behaviors are similar to those in southern Oregon.

The GAP discussed impacts on overfished species and understands that any potential effects on those species will be included in the analyses.

Regarding enforcement concerns, the exempted fishing permit (EFP) was developed years ago in coordination with Oregon State Police, taking into account their concerns at the time. The GAP does suggest adding two clarifications to the description of gear configuration: 1) The sinker should be *no less than* 30 feet below the lowest hook; and 2) the float must be located above the top hook.

California fishermen have stated it is important to retain existing seasons or use this to extend the season. However, having this tool in the toolbox *could* allow for fishing in deeper water or in the RCA.

One of the main benefits to using this gear is that it would take pressure off of nearshore stocks and black rockfish in particular, in both states.

Fishermen in both Oregon and California reiterated the desire to have this fishery apply to both charter vessels and private boats at the same time. Phasing in this gear type to only one sector at a time would not work.

Furthermore, the GAP discussed whether including the options for California would delay potential implementation in Oregon. GAP members agreed it is preferable to include options for California and move forward with the fishery for both states at the same time, regardless of any delay.

PFMC  
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