

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
BLACKGILL-SLOPE ROCKFISH INTERSECTOR ALLOCATION AND
ACCUMULATION LIMIT ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with Mr. John DeVore to discuss blackgill and slope rockfish intersector allocation. The Council is considering an action to remove blackgill rockfish from the slope rockfish complex south of 40°10' N. latitude to manage it as a single species instead of within the complex. As part of this action, the Council also is considering how to reallocate blackgill and slope rockfish south of 40°10' N. between the various groundfish sectors. The purpose of this action is to reduce the risk of exceeding the blackgill rockfish annual catch limit contribution south of 40°10' N. and ensure an equitable allocation of the harvestable surplus of blackgill rockfish and the remaining slope rockfish managed in the southern Slope Rockfish complex.

After a great deal of discussion, the GAP was unable to come to a consensus on a recommended preferred alternative for the Council.

[Historical context](#)

It is nearly impossible to discuss this issue without some background and how these species relate to other species and with traditional fishing fleet behaviors.

The non-trawl limited entry (LE) and open access (OA) fixed gear sector in the Pt. Conception area historically relied on blackgill rockfish in a directed fishery and also as bycatch in the shortspine thornyhead, sablefish, and slope rockfish fisheries. Restrictive blackgill trip limits implemented in 2013 resulted in dramatically low landings of shortspines and sablefish by the fixed gear sector. Shortspine landings south of Pt. Conception once averaged roughly 240 mt annually; only 139 mt were landed in 2014. Sablefish landings averaged near 1,000 mt but now projected landings are half of that, at 500 mt for this year. Fixed gear fishermen now have only minimal landings of slope rockfish.

However, the blackgill stock seems to be increasing. This leads to more blackgill bycatch encounters, especially after extremely restrictive blackgill rockfish trip limits were implemented in 2013. Non-trawl fixed gear fishermen from the Pt. Conception area believe there is insufficient blackgill available to prosecute the fleet's traditional fisheries.

Conversely, there has been no historical trawl fishery for these species south of Pt. Conception, 34°27' N. latitude. However, blackgill rockfish *has* been caught in the trawl fishery north of Pt. Conception and south of 40°10' N. latitude.

[Current conditions](#)

The implementation of the trawl catch shares program in 2011 resulted in some unintended consequences. The allowance of trawl-permitted vessels from ports north of 40°10' N. latitude to

access sablefish with fixed gear in southern California caused some displacement of local fixed gear fleets on the fishing grounds.

The Amendment 21 allocation of the southern Slope Rockfish complex is 63 percent trawl and 37 percent non-trawl. That is almost exactly opposite of historical catches of blackgill by trawl and non-trawl sectors, which were roughly 40 percent trawl and 60 percent non-trawl. When the initial Amendment 21 intersector allocation was being considered, nobody expected trawlers using fixed gear would take advantage of the flip-flopped allocation; a trawl fishery had never existed in the area south of Pt. Conception before.

GAP discussion

The fixed gear sector sees removing blackgill from the complex as the only option available to retain access to historically caught species and fisheries that have been established over generations. Removing blackgill from the complex and reallocating blackgill based on the historical total catch would allow for higher trip limits and help ensure the viability of the fixed gear fleet.

Conversely, removing blackgill from the complex would require the creation of an entirely new category in the IFQ program. The amount available would likely be so low that it would become a new constraining species in an already struggling sector. Trawlers in the catch shares program are currently experiencing the impact of a number of constraining species, mostly restricting fishing activity on the continental shelf. A new choke species on the slope at this time would further hamper the ability of the trawl fishery to access fish.

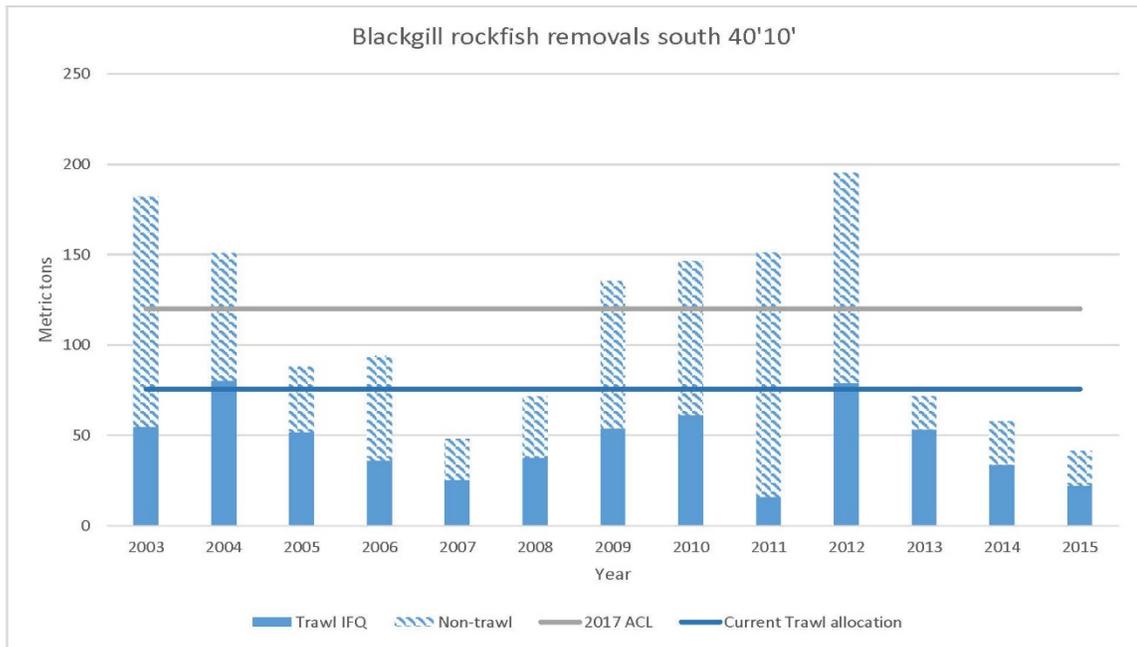
Summary

In summary, the fixed gear sector is well aware of the likely detrimental effects to the trawl IFQ program should blackgill be removed from the complex. But current management is causing detrimental effects to the fixed gear fleet in the south. Additionally, sentiment for the trawl IFQ program is very poor because of the shift in effort that occurred several years ago by boats participating in the gear switching provision of the IFQ program.

The trawl sector is concerned about removing blackgill rockfish from the southern Slope Rockfish complex due to creation of a new constraining species on the slope. They fully understand the strong desire of fixed gear fishermen to have higher trip limits for blackgill and support efforts to achieve these increases outside of blackgill reallocation.

However, when reviewing the current catches of blackgill rockfish since 2013 there does not appear to be a conservation basis for removing blackgill rockfish from the complex (i.e., the ACL contribution of blackgill to the complex has not been exceeded). Without a conservation basis for such a move, there appears to be no justification at this time.

Both the fixed gear and trawl sectors need to be successful. Current regulations, through unintended consequences, have rendered that impossible. Additionally, it's apparent there is room for higher blackgill trip limits and we encourage the Council to support those limits. The GAP also requests the Council consider higher limits during the 2017-18 harvest specifications process.



PFMC
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