

GROUND FISH ADVISORY PANEL REPORT ON AMENDMENT 21 ALLOCATION REVISIONS

The Groundfish Advisory Panel (GAP) received a presentation from Ms. Jessie Doerpinghaus about Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reports 1 and 2 (Agenda Item G.2.a, WDFW Report 1, June 2016 and Agenda Item G.2.a, Supplemental WDFW Report 2, June 2016). The GAP also heard from Ms. Gretchen Hanshew about the supplemental NMFS report (Agenda Item G.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report, June 2016). The reports helped the GAP develop the following recommendations to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council).

Our recommendations focus on three specific areas: the need for higher Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for darkblotched rockfish and Pacific Ocean perch (POP), modification of the management tool used for the at-sea sectors for darkblotched rockfish and POP from allocations to sector-specific set asides for each species, and to address the need to prevent premature closure of the catcher-processor (CP) and mothership (MS) sectors.

Darkblotched Rockfish and POP ACLs

Encounter rates of these two species are increasing in all sectors of the trawl fishery. In recent years, the at-sea whiting sectors have spent more and more time and energy avoiding darkblotched and POP. Shoreside whiting and non-whiting trawlers are catching these species in expanded areas and at greater depths, and in larger amounts, than seen in recent years. Based on the current stock assessment darkblotched rockfish is rebuilt in 2016. Encounter rates of POP by all sectors across expansive areas suggest that POP is also rebounding, potentially, faster than anticipated in the most recent stock assessment. Higher ACLs for these species would provide benefits to all sectors of the trawl fishery.

For darkblotched rockfish, as suggested by NMFS in their supplemental report (Agenda Item G.2.a, Supplemental NMFS Report, June 2016), the GAP recommends that, under Agenda Item G.4, the Council reconsider the ACLs adopted in April 2016 and to then set the 2017/2018 darkblotched ACL equal to the ABC (that is 641 mt in 2017 and 663 mt in 2018). This action will increase the amount of darkblotched rockfish available to all sectors.

For POP, based on Table 2 from Agenda Item I.4, [Attachment 7 November 2015](#), which detailed POP projections from the 2011 rebuilding analysis with actual catch numbers for recent years, the GAP recommends that, under Agenda Item G.4, the Council reconsider the ACLs adopted in April 2016 and to then set the POP ACLs for 2017 and 2018 at an SPR of 0.839 (column 6 in Table 2), which results in ACL values of 208 mt (2017) and 212 mt (in 2018). The GAP recognizes that this action is estimated to add two years to the rebuilding time to T50%, but the GAP strongly believes that the economic gains from the increased ACL outweigh this small effect on the rebuilding time frame, will be of great benefit to the fishery, and result in with *de minimis* conservation risk. The Council could also consider adopting column 5 in Table 2 from November 2015 document, which uses an SPR value of 0.858, rebuilds to T50% in the same year as the current FPA (i.e., 2051), and results in ACL values of 180 mt (2017) and 184 mt (2018). POP is not a target species, which is reflected in its annual attainment (35-40% of the ACL) in 2011-2015, but increasing encounter rates are making it an ever more problematic choke species. Moreover,

if the Council adds POP to the list of full assessments for 2017 then there will be a basis to respond, if warranted, to the new stock assessment information for the 2018 fishery.

For both darkblotched rockfish and POP, the GAP recommends the Council establish an approach where extra amounts of fish made available from the increased ACLs be placed into a set aside within the “off-the-top” deduction category. These amounts of fish could be used inseason to address unforeseen circumstances.

Set Asides as the At-Sea Sectors Management Tool for Darkblotched and POP

Consistent with our report from April 2016 (#7 in Agenda Item F.6.a, REVISED Supplemental GAP Report, April 2016), the GAP recommends the Council take action to evolve the management tool used by the at-sea sectors for darkblotched rockfish and POP from allocations to set asides with the goal of implementing the change in time for the 2017 whiting season. As stated in April 2016, “the at-sea sectors have been constrained by insufficient amounts of some of these choke species and changing these allocations to set-asides could alleviate reactionary decisions on behalf of the sectors and the Council, especially as these species continue to rebuild.” The at-sea sectors representatives on the GAP stressed that using set asides to manage incidental catch of darkblotched rockfish and POP provides a better means to optimize whiting harvest and minimize incidental catches of all non-target species. This approach has proven successful for species like rougheye rockfish and spiny dogfish shark.

Amounts of darkblotched rockfish and POP to the At-Sea Sectors

The GAP had considerable discussion about this issue. We reviewed the alternatives and analysis provided in the two WDFW reports. The GAP endeavored to develop an additional alternative to add to the current range. The new alternative seeks to balance the needs of the shoreside trawl sector and the at-sea whiting sectors. The GAP recommends the following range of alternatives be adopted for further analysis:

	NO ACTION	Alternative 1	New Alternative
Darkblotched			
CP	13.5	25	25
MS	9.5	20	20
POP			
CP	10.1	20	15
MS	7.2	15	10

Increased amounts provided to the at-sea sectors would be an interim measure to address the current problem. These amounts would be reviewed and potentially changed during the next biennial management cycle. Moreover, as noted above, increased ACLs for darkblotched rockfish and POP would provide amounts of fish that could be set aside. Those amounts could provide additional relief if the amounts proposed in the new alternative are adopted by the Council are not sufficient during 2017 and 2018. The GAP anticipates that further analysis will be conducted before September to form the basis for final action at the September 2016 Council meeting, which should facilitate implementation in time for the 2017 whiting fishery.