

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON SPECIFICATIONS PROCESS FOR 2019-2020 MANAGEMENT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with Mr. John DeVore and Ms. Kelly Ames to discuss harvest specifications and management measures for 2019-2020 and offers the following comments and recommendations.

Harvest Specifications

The GAP considered the table of harvest specifications under default harvest control rules (HCRs) in Agenda Item E.9, Supplemental Attachment 6 and, in general, agrees with those specifications, especially as we anticipate more information coming in November. Specifically, the GAP requests the following:

California Scorpionfish

The GAP requests analysis of a range of alternatives for California scorpionfish annual catch limits (ACLs). We suggest analyzing a range of alternatives from the constant catch ACL of 150 mt up to ACL=acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 313 mt in 2019 and 307 mt in 2020.

In 2014, the total mortality of California scorpionfish was 125 mt, which exceeded the ACL and the overfishing limit (OFL), requiring dramatic management changes. An ACL of 150 mt is very close to the 125 mt total mortality in 2014. A higher ACL could allow a year-round sport season in southern California south of Pt. Conception and could eliminate the March-April closure for commercial fisheries.

Lingcod South

The GAP recommends changing the P* (overfishing probability) value from 0.4 to 0.45 for lingcod in waters off California because the SSC has reclassified this stock from a category 2 stock to a category 1 stock. A category 1 stock is relatively data-rich, and a P* of 0.45 is an appropriate specification for a category 1 stock. Under default HCRs a P* value of 0.4 would automatically roll over from the current biennium to the 2019-2020 biennium unless changed. However, since the SSC has reclassified lingcod south (i.e., the assessed area off California) to a category 1 stock, the GAP requests a departure from the default HCRs and analysis of a P* value of 0.45. The harvest specifications for lingcod under a P* of 0.45 would provide some relief for fisheries relative to those under the default HCRs (**Table 1**).

Table 1. 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for lingcod north and south of 40°10' N lat. based on P* values of 0.45 and 0.4.

Area	P* in CA a/	2019			2020 b/		
		OFL	ABC	ACL	OFL	ABC	ACL
N of 40°10' N lat.	0.4	4,957	4,727	4,704	4,701	4,483	4,459
S. of 40°10' N lat.		986	900	812	894	816	724
N of 40°10' N lat.	0.45	4,957	4,739	4,713	4,699	4,493	4,466
S. of 40°10' N lat.		986	943	847	889	850	750

a/ The default lingcod harvest control rule is a P* of 0.4 for the southern model in California and 0.45 for the northern model in Oregon and Washington.

b/ These are presumptive harvest specifications for 2020 under default harvest specifications since the SSC has yet to review OFLs under a P* of 0.4 for the southern lingcod model.

Blackgill Rockfish

The GAP recognizes that not having blackgill rockfish removed from the complex in place for the 2019-2020 biennium means harvest specifications and management measures analyses for both situations – blackgill as a stand-alone target species and as part of the complex – will require more time and workload in the specifications package. The GAP continues to express the importance of implementing Council actions as soon as possible because, if implementation is delayed, it causes increased workload for harvest specifications analyses.

Management Measures

GAP members considered the reports from the Washington, Oregon and California departments of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) statement under this agenda item. We support analysis of the ranges and options contained in those reports. During discussions, the GAP also requested the following options for analysis. Some of these may also be included in the GMT statement that was developed at the same time. The GAP is not in the position to judge which items are routine and which are new, so we are putting them all forward with the expectation determinations will be made at subsequent GMT meetings in October and during the November Council meeting.

Pacific ocean perch and darkblotched rockfish set-asides for the at-sea sector

The GAP discussed the formula outlined in the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for establishing the at-sea set-asides for POP and darkblotched as noted in the situation summary for this agenda item. Until POP has gone through the mop-up panel and the final assessment recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the GAP thinks it is premature to consider potential changes to the Amendment 21 formulae for darkblotched and POP.

Directed commercial Pacific halibut

Regarding Pacific halibut, the GAP supports the CDFW report that suggests the depth restrictions for Pacific halibut be modified or eliminated. However, we also support this for the Pacific halibut fishery in Oregon and Washington and request an analysis of those RCA line modifications or eliminations be included.

Slope, darkblotched rockfish and thornyheads for open access north of 40° 10' N. Lat.

The current slope and darkblotched rockfish limit is no more than 25 percent of the weight of sablefish landed per trip. This frequently leads to unnecessary discarding of rockfish. The GAP requests analysis of a 500-pound monthly trip limit of slope rockfish and darkblotched rockfish. A 500-pound monthly limit is not enough to induce targeting but would simply turn discards into retained catch.

The GAP also requests analysis of a 50-pound monthly limit for shortspine and longspine thornyheads for open access north of 40° 10' N. Lat. The same rationale applies, as thornyheads are currently discarded because retention is prohibited (i.e., the limit is “closed”). A 50-pound limit is low enough to allow for sablefish bycatch but not promote targeted fishing.

California nearshore commercial fishery

The GAP requests analysis of a year-round fishery for the nearshore sector in California (between 40° 10' N. Lat. and 34° 27' N. Lat.) with a 1,200-pound/2 month limit. This is included in the CDFW report.

California commercial vertical gear

The GAP received a request to allow a 2,000 lbs/2 months fishery, year-round, between 40 and 100 fathoms, with vertical gear, within the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA). This would use the same type of gear as in the Platt-Emley exempted fishing permit (EFP). The GAP appreciates the thought put into this public comment request to protect yelloweye rockfish but suggests it may be more appropriate to consider this for regulation implementation after the EFP is completed.

California recreational access to 75 fathoms in Southern California Bight

This appears to be included in the CDFW report under “Evaluate changes in other management areas,” but the GAP includes it here to ensure its inclusion for analysis. Fishermen are currently limited to 60 fathoms, but access to deeper waters would allow access to chilipepper, vermilion, widow and bocaccio rockfish.

California recreational access to 40 fathoms in the Western cowcod conservation area (CCA)

The GAP supports analysis of recreational access to 40 fathoms (currently 20 fathoms) in the Western CCA.

Modify the shape of the Western CCA to allow fixed gear groundfish fishing outside the 150-fathom line

This is included in the CDFW report. This would allow more access to sablefish and shortspine thornyheads.

Explore differential recreational limits by area in California for black rockfish and lingcod

This request also is in the CDFW report but the GAP also requests an analysis be done for lingcod due to the change in lingcod south from a category 2 stock to a category 1 stock. If fishermen could have different, more generous regulations north of 40° 10' N. Lat., this would allow greater access to a more abundant stock.

Summary of Recommendations

Harvest specifications alternatives for analysis:

- 1 California scorpionfish:** ACL=ABC; and
- 2 Lingcod South:** Analyze a change in the P* value from 0.4 to 0.45 since it is a category 1 stock

New management measure alternatives for analysis:

- **POP and darkblotched set-asides:** Choose option in November, after mop-up and GMT meeting;
- **Directed commercial Pacific halibut:** Modify or remove RCA lines in California, Oregon and Washington;
- **Open access north of 40° 10' N. Lat.:** Analyze retention of rockfish and monthly limits;
- **California nearshore commercial:** analyze limits for a year-round fishery;
- **California vertical gear:** Delay changes until after the EFP is completed;
- **California recreational access:** Consider 75 fathom line in Southern California Bight;
- **California recreational western cowcod Area:** Analyze a 40-fathom line change;
- **California commercial non-trawl:** Analyze 150-fathom line to allow access in CCA; and
- **California black rockfish and lingcod:** Explore differential recreational limits.

PFMC
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