

## **California Department of Fish and Game Recreational Inseason Update for 2010**

The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) reviewed the recreational bycatch estimates of yelloweye rockfish in 2008 and 2009 to evaluate expected bycatch in 2010. The management measures in effect in 2008 and 2009 are nearly identical to current management measures for 2010. In the three management areas most likely to encounter yelloweye rockfish (north of Pigeon Point), the 2010 season is open only three to four and a half months. The areas with the highest impacts are North of Point Arena where fishing is restricted to only 20 fms. Estimated statewide impacts in recent years ranged from 1.8 mt (2008) to 3.9 mt (2009).

While the existing management measures were originally crafted to keep impacts below a 2010 CA recreational harvest guideline of 2.8 mt, CDFG has considered other factors that are expected to result in even lower statewide recreational bycatch for 2010, due either to reduced mortality on encountered fish or reduced fishing effort.

- Yelloweye rockfish bycatch in Shelter Cove has been the highest of any California port in many months in recent years. CDFG expects fishing effort out of Shelter Cove to be reduced this year because their tractor launch operation is not in service, limiting the size of vessels that can fish from this port. Without the tractor launch, the magnitude of yelloweye rockfish catch accruing at this port in 2010 is expected to be greatly diminished.
- As of June 6, 2010 weekly tracking indicates that only 0.23 mt of yelloweye rockfish catch has been taken in the recreational fishery so far in 2010. This estimated bycatch is substantially lower than the estimate for this same time in both 2008 and 2009. Estimated impacts were twice as high at this time in 2008, a year that resulted in only 1.8 mt of bycatch, and three times as high at this time in 2009, a year that resulted in 3.9 mt of bycatch. CDFG will continue its weekly tracking of yelloweye rockfish catch during the season so that actions can be anticipated before monthly projections are available—as in the past two years.
- CDFG expects reduced mortality of yelloweye that are taken as bycatch compared with 2008 and 2009. In 2009, CDFG began extensive outreach and education efforts to help anglers identify yelloweye rockfish to prevent retention and improve release rates. This effort has continued in 2010. The current 20 fm depth restriction North of Point Arena equates to a mortality rate of less than 40 % when fish are released compared to the 100% mortality on retained fish. Therefore, fish released as a result of outreach efforts that otherwise would have been retained will result in lower impacts. In 2005, 18.5 % of yelloweye rockfish were retained while in 2008 and 2009 retention was only about 10% of the total impacts. So far in 2010 the retention rate is only 2.7%, suggesting the outreach efforts have succeeded in reducing overall mortality to yelloweye.

Outreach efforts included: mass mailing of copies of a yelloweye rockfish identification flyer informing anglers not to retain yelloweye, and a flyer on the use of descending devices to reduce mortality on released fish sent to license vendors, tackle shops and harbormasters to distribute to the public. In addition, CDFG personnel participated in season openers at key launch ramps by distributing information to anglers before fishing. These increased outreach efforts are continuing in 2010.

- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were implemented in 2010 in the North-Central Coast Area which protect nearshore rocky habitats and now prohibit recreational fishing for groundfish. The 21 MPAs include 86 square miles (11%) of state waters in the region between Alder Creek (near Point Arena) in Mendocino County and Pigeon Point in San Mateo County that are new “no take” areas. The closure of these areas is expected to result in reduced impacts to yelloweye in 2010 based on the distribution of prior yelloweye catch in the specific areas now closed, and expected reductions in overall groundfish fishing effort in the region. In addition, yelloweye impacts may be further reduced if additional effort declines occur due to infrastructure losses in communities and fishing ports in the region that could result from MPA implementation.

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