

FISHERIES IN 2015-2016 AND BEYOND HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS,
 MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND AMENDMENT 24

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The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed and discussed the materials provided under Agenda Item F.7, including the Action Item Checklist ([Agenda Item F.7.a., Attachment 1](#)), which itemizes the anticipated Council actions. For several items, the GMT did not identify a need for further discussion; therefore, those items are not detailed in this report. The remaining items are discussed below in the order they appear in the Action Item Checklist.

A summary of GMT recommendations can be found at the end of the statement.

2015-2016 Harvest Specifications

Checklist Item #2: Confirm P* and ABCs. Adopt revised 2016 cowcod ABC

In November 2013, the Council selected their final preferred P* values, working from the November 2013 [GMT Supplemental Report under Agenda Item H.6](#). In Tables 1 and 2 of the GMT statement, four species (arrowtooth flounder, Pacific cod, shortbelly rockfish and yelloweye rockfish) were mistakenly omitted. The wording of the Council motions, setting P* of 0.45 for all species unless stated otherwise (arrowtooth flounder was added as an exception in an amendment to the motion), resulted in a change in P* for Pacific cod, shortbelly rockfish and yelloweye rockfish from 0.40 to 0.45. Speaking with the motion maker and reviewing the record, it is the GMT's understanding that the change from status quo P* for these three species was unintended. **The GMT recommends that the Council consider revisiting their P* decision for Pacific cod, shortbelly rockfish and yelloweye rockfish.** The GMT notes that the annual catch limit (ACL) harvest control rule (HCR) for these three species is independent of the allowable biological catch (ABC), so if the Council were to revise their P* decision there would be no downstream effects to the ACLs, harvest guidelines (HGs), management measures, etc.

Checklist Item #5: Confirm rebuilding plan parameters including a new T_{target} for cowcod

The draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) states that the Council could consider setting a later year for T_{target} than the median time to rebuild, considering uncertainty in assessment. In concept, this approach may prevent having to revise the rebuilding plan in the next cycle if something changes. Alternatively, the Council could adopt the median time to rebuild which theoretically means that there would be a 50 percent chance of re-specifying T_{target} with the next assessment.

It is our understanding that a full assessment may be desirable in the next few years (i.e. rather than catch reports) given that there may be new information from visual surveys in the cowcod conservation area (CCA). We note that cowcod assessments are fairly uncertain due to relatively little data to inform them. While there is some administrative burden to altering T_{target} with each subsequent rebuilding analysis, the Council should weigh this against the perception of giving themselves additional time to rebuild by extending the T_{target} beyond the median time to rebuild. Ultimately, the GMT would like to see an approach whereby a window of rebuilding probability is specified (i.e. rather than focusing on a point estimate date) with thresholds indicating whether adequate progress is being made toward rebuilding. We are optimistic that the explorations of alternative rebuilding scenarios, which is intended to inform rebuilding revision rules, ([Agenda Item G.7.a, Attachment 2, September 2013](#)) currently being conducted by Chantel Wentzel can inform development of such an approach.

2015-2016 Stock Complexes

Checklist Item #6: Confirm EC species' designations and associated FMP language to be implemented under Amendment 24

The GMT was informed at this meeting that NMFS is looking for more information on the Council's recommendation to designate Pacific Grenadier as an ecosystem component (EC) species. The GMT provides a discussion on EC designation for Pacific Grenadier under Agenda Item F.7.b, Supplemental GMT Report 2

2015-2016 Allocations and Harvest Guidelines (HG's)

Checklist Item #9: Confirm or modify amounts deducted from the ACL to account for groundfish mortality in Tribal, non-groundfish fisheries, EFPs and Research.

Tribal

The GMT notes that Tables 4-51 and 4-53 in the DEIS ([Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 4](#)) need to be updated to reflect the set aside increases requested by the Makah Tribe in their May 21, 2014 letter to NMFS ([Agenda Item F.7.b, Supplemental Tribal Report](#)). That request was to increase English sole from 91 mt to 200 mt, Pacific cod from 400 mt to 500 mt, widow rockfish from 60 mt to 100 mt, yellowtail rockfish from 677 mt to 1,000 mt, and to include a set aside for spiny dogfish of 275 mt.

Research

The GMT provided an update to research catch under the Inseason agenda item at this meeting ([Agenda Item F.4.b, Supplemental GMT Report](#)), following initial catch reports from the trawl survey, and discussed whether an adjustment to the canary rockfish set aside is necessary. Research catch of canary rockfish in the NMFS trawl survey to date is estimated to be 2.2 mt. The Council approach is that off-the-top deductions should be equal to the maximum historical scientific research catch from 2005-2012, except for canary rockfish and yelloweye rockfish. The Council policy for yelloweye and canary rockfish was not to adopt the maximum historical catch. The Council considered the high research catch for canary rockfish in 2006 from the NMFS trawl survey a rare event and adopted a set aside of 4.5 mt, which is higher than the average research catch (2005-2012), but lower than the maximum historical value.

Recent canary rockfish catch under research has been variable in recent years but has not exceeded the 4.5 mt set aside. (2010: 1.9 mt, 2011: 0.62 mt, 2012: 3.75 mt and 2013 (preliminary): 1.5 mt). Considering the research catch from 2010-2013, the GMT does not think there is sufficient cause to recommend an increase to the canary set aside for 2015-2016.

Checklist Item #13: Confirm or modify 2-year within non-trawl HGs or within non-trawl shares for 2015-2016

Nearshore Rockfish North of 40°10' N. lat.

Since the last Council meeting, state Council representatives have discussed the implications of harvest guidelines on the Nearshore Rockfish Complex for recreational and commercial fisheries in each state. The magnitude of reduction in catch needed to remain below harvest guidelines is disproportionate among states with the greatest reductions required in Oregon, while California

and Washington can still provide status quo management under at least some of the harvest guideline options. In the case of California, this is due to the already reduced season length and shallower depth restrictions in the recreational fishery (5.5 months) and shallower depth restrictions in the commercial fishery to limit mortality on yelloweye rockfish.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) report ([Agenda Item F.7.b., Supplemental CDFW Report 1](#)) proposes a Federal harvest guideline of 23.7 mt, which represents the mortality under the CDFW Preferred Alternative, which is the same as the No Action alternative mortality north of 40°10 N. latitude, in the EIS [i.e., expected commercial landings (Table 4-39) combined with projected recreational mortality (Table 4-50)].

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) report ([Agenda Item F.7.b., Supplemental WDFW/ODFW Report](#)) outlines a trigger for inseason consultation and coordination at 62 mt or 75 percent attainment of each state's respective status quo harvest levels as noted in Table 1 of their report. The GMT acknowledges the commitment of the states to keep catch to the 69 mt coastwide ACL. The GMT recommends that inseason tracking and scheduling of the consultation call(s) are completed early enough to include projected impacts of mortality for discarded fish if non-retention of nearshore rockfish is necessary to stay within the coastwide ACL. Questions have arisen relative to the timing of season openings, the different pace of recreational and commercial fisheries in each state, and the potential for inequity in attainment between states at the time in which inseason action becomes necessary.

The GMT provides a summary of the cumulative mortality in the Oregon and Washington recreational and commercial fisheries during 2008-2012 by month to show the seasonality of the fisheries relative to the proposed 75 percent trigger, Appendix A, Figure 2. In addition the mortality in 2012 alone was analyzed to provide a more recent depiction of the rate of catch accumulation as catch has increased significantly in recent years and use of data in previous years may under project the rate of mortality accumulation Appendix A, Figure 3. These figures indicate that the trigger is likely to be reached between June and July under status quo conditions, though the one to one and a half month lag in the recreational fishery data will not allow analysts to realize it has been reached until August and mortality will continue to accrue during the intervening period and until action is taken after consultation.

The ODFW report under F.3 ([Agenda Item F.3.b., Supplemental ODFW Report](#)) proposes further analysis of Nearshore Rockfish complex management under the omnibus package. In the long-term, the states may be most satisfied by a state level management system that provides ACLs for each state resulting from assessments stratified at state boundaries. The GMT analysis of state specific harvest guidelines (HG) for the Nearshore Rockfish complex ([Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 5](#)) points out the inadequacy of any allocation method to truly represent the relative abundance along the coast to facilitate allocation and differential regulations over time necessitating assessment and management at a state level to facilitate improved management. ODFW has indicated that they have sufficient infrastructure to assess and manage nearshore stocks within their waters. The higher species diversity makes this less feasible in the waters off of California where 12 species of Nearshore Rockfish other than black rockfish occur (Love et

al. 2002) and management would benefit from a federal nexus to provide regular assessment with assistance from the Science Centers.

Establishing an improved management system that is responsive to the needs of each state is beyond the scope of the 2015-2016 regulatory specifications process and should be addressed either in the omnibus package or in the 2017-2018 regulatory specification process. In the interim, the proposed actions of the states may be sufficient to prevent an ACL overage and will be dependent on our ability to project and track catch during the course of the season. The management measures to remain within this value have not been specified up front and will be developed inseason depending on the nature of the concern. The proposed California recreational and commercial management measures are projected to keep mortality within the HG of 23.7 mt, which is lower than all but the lowest allocation under the miles of coastline HG allocation option analyzed by the GMT ([Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 6](#)). California can take inseason action to keep mortality within the California state HG if needed. The GMT recognizes that these are interim measures while an improved management system can be developed that accounts for differing management between states and the potential for differing levels of depletion that results. While stock assessment authors may prefer alternative stratifications, the GMT feels that independent state ACLs based on assessments stratified at state lines would facilitate management at the state level in the future.

Checklist Item #13: Within non-trawl: Two-Year Yelloweye Sharing- consider transferring 0.6 mt of the yelloweye rockfish non-trawl allocation fishery HG from the non-nearshore to nearshore

The GMT provided an initial analysis regarding transferring 0.6 mt of the yelloweye rockfish non-trawl allocation fishery HG from the non-nearshore to the nearshore commercial fixed gear sectors under [Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 6](#). The GMT provides additional analysis and discussion this issue in Agenda Item F.7.b., Supplemental GMT Report 2.

Currently, projected mortality of yelloweye rockfish is 0.6 - 0.7 mt lower than the catch share for non-nearshore fixed gear, and 0.0 to 0.1 mt lower than the catch share for nearshore fisheries. These projections are point estimates, and based on average catch over a number of years. Historical catch data show high variability in yelloweye catch among years – a simulation analysis was used to demonstrate that estimated yelloweye mortality in the fixed gear fisheries may range somewhere between approximately 40% of the point estimated (low) to approximately 175% of the point estimate (high), 90% of the time. This variability should be taken into account when catch share decisions are made. Some buffer between catch projections and catch share may lead to higher stability for these fisheries. We show that the commercial non-trawl sector would have exceeded the 2015 allocation (PPA) in 2 of 10 years. Finally, we show that the probability of west coast fisheries exceeding the ACL is 0.7 percent under status quo, and 2.1 percent if 0.6 mt of yelloweye is moved from the non-nearshore fishery to the nearshore fishery, and the entire amount is taken by the nearshore fishery.

The analyses associated with transferring up to 0.6 mt of yelloweye allocation from the non-nearshore to the nearshore sector considered both the risk of the total coastwide catch exceeding the ACL, which is low under any level of transfer, and the risk of individual sectors exceeding their allocation, which is more difficult to quantify due to variability among years and uncertainty in the estimated catches. However, a transfer from the non-nearshore sector that has

had a larger buffer to the nearshore sector (for which various other management measure are being explored) is likely to reduce the overall risk of a sector exceeding its allocation.

The GMT recommends that the Council consider annual variability and the probability of exceeding the ACL when deciding whether to move 0.6 mt (or less) of yelloweye rockfish from the non-nearshore fishery to the nearshore fishery. The GMT notes that buffers between the point estimate and the catch share may reduce the chance of exceeding the catch share.

2015-2016 Season Structures

Checklist Item #15: Trawl RCA

Modified trawl RCA seaward boundary line between 40° 10' N. latitude and 45° 46' N. latitude

Currently, depth-based management tools for bottom trawl gears include rockfish conservation areas (RCA), which are used to control catch of species (e.g. target species, bycatch species, and overfished species). In the event the Council's preferred alternative RCA, which includes a 150 fm seaward RCA from 40° 10' to 45° 46' N. latitude year round, is unavailable per NMFS inseason disapproval, the Groundfish Advisory Panel (GAP) has requested implementation of the seaward 200 modified line year round. Given the low bycatch rates for overfished species in the rationalized fishery, the GAP recommends increasing access to target stocks through implementation of the seaward modified 200 fathom line. This action would allow fishing participants to further demonstrate individual accountability of the shorebased trawl Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program to minimize bycatch and incidental catch of overfished species. This action is needed to enable participants the ability to more fully and efficiently utilize their quota pounds, while still meeting the Council's goal for sustainability of the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery. Low attainments of some economically important species and implementation of the seaward modified 200 fathom line would allow trawlers to take advantage of opportunities to maximize the potential of their business plans, while allowing the IFQ system to minimize risks to stocks of concern.

The trawl RCA Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by NMFS demonstrates that the risk of exceeding Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) of any species or contribution Overfishing Limits (OFLs) for species within a complex by implementing the 200 fathom modified seaward boundary line between 40° 10' N. latitude and 45° 46' N. latitude is unlikely. Overfished species impacts were analyzed in the EA to characterize impacts of the implementation of the 200 fathom modified line, with a heightened emphasis on canary rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, yelloweye rockfish, and petrale sole. Other non-target species were analyzed in the EA, with an emphasis on spiny dogfish, longnose skate, aurora rockfish, roughey rockfish, and shortraker rockfish. The analysis of impacts to overfished species and other non-target species under year-round implementation of the 200 fathom modified petrale line indicate that there is little risk in catch exceeding the ACL.

Regarding potential Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) impacts, the RCA EA analyzed spatial differences between the 200 fathom RCA line and the 200 fathom-"modified" line (Figure 4-4

and 4-5 in the EA) with petrale cutouts. In addition, qualitative information was provided in table 4-2 in the EA to help ascertain whether each cutout was deliberate. Furthermore, a thorough investigation of the proportion of substrate types (probable hard, mixed, and soft substrates) within the different depth zones between 40° 10' N. and 48° 10' N. latitude was completed.¹ Due to the limitations of scale from the available GIS data layers, defining substrate type percentage break-outs within each individual petrale cutout would likely not be sufficiently informative, and may be overly speculative given the small size of many of these cutouts. Since these areas have largely been open to bottom trawl gear intermittently for a number of years, much of these areas have likely been impacted at some point in recent years, and therefore have not had a chance for habitat recovery, even if effort within them is not necessarily spatially uniform. Furthermore, preliminary logbook analysis provided in Table 4-160 in [Agenda Item F.7.a, REVISED Supplemental Attachment 11](#) suggests that petrale sole cutout areas have a very high degree of bottom trawl effort, with higher proportional (1) number of tows, (2) tow duration, and (3) total haul weight. **Therefore, the GMT concludes exceeding ACLs of any species or contribution OFLs for species within a complex, or adverse impacts to EFH is unlikely to occur by opening the petrale cut outs with a seaward year-round 200 fathom-modified line between 40° 10' N. and 45° 46' N. latitude.**

Checklist Item #16: Non-trawl trip limits (including sablefish)

Regarding the non-trawl coastwide sablefish trip limit analysis ([Agenda Item F.7.a, Attachment 6](#), June 2014, B.10), the GMT would like to clarify a specific sentence. That sentence, found on page 119, third paragraph, states that “Projected attainment values for the four sablefish daily trip limit (DTL) fisheries under the No Action Alternative are within the range generally recommended by the Council, of between 90 and 95 percent...”. The GMT does not recall the Council making that specific recommendation. Instead, the GMT often provides a range of alternatives, sometimes resulting in projections equaling or slightly exceeding 100 percent. Sablefish landings are variable among years, and depend on things such as weather, price, and successfulness of other fisheries. The Council often considers all of these factors, along with how far the fishery has advanced into the season, before making their trip limit decision. This is a matter of measuring risk. In some cases, the Council has set trip limits when projections showed 100 percent attainment, whereas in other cases the Council has selected trip limits showing projections lower than 100 percent.

Checklist Item #20: Season dates, bag limits, length limits, area closures

The GMT recommends the Council consider the CDFW preferred California Recreational Season and Depth Restrictions for 2015-2016 as described in the CDFW state report (Agenda Item F.7.b, REVISED Supplemental CDFW Report 2). The season and depth restrictions in each management area are depicted in Figure 1, which are projected to keep the mortality of target and overfished stocks presented in Table 1 and Table 2 within their respective harvest limits. In addition, an increase in the lingcod bag limit from be two to three fish, statewide can

¹ (1) 75-100 fathoms, (2) 100-150 fathoms (the core RCA not requested for opening), and (3) 150-200 fathoms (with further investigation within these depths between 40° 10' N. and 45° 46' N. latitude, and between 45° 46' N. and 48° 10' N. latitude).

be accommodated and is proposed under the CDFW preferred alternative. Though angler trips from this option are not yet available for review, they are within the range presented in the EIS.

Management Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Northern	Closed				May 15 – Oct 31 <20 fm						Closed	
Mendocino	Closed				May 15 – Oct 31 <20 fm						Closed	
San Francisco	Closed			April 15 – Dec 31 <30 fm								
Central	Closed			April 1 – Dec 31 <40 fm								
Southern	Closed		Mar 1 – Dec 31 <60 fm									

Figure 1. CDFW Preferred Alternative: California recreational groundfish season structure and depth restrictions for 2015-2016.

Table 1. CDFW Preferred Alternative: California recreational projected mortality of overfished species for 2015-2016.

Species	Projected Mortality (mt)
Bocaccio	117.2
Canary Rockfish	18.2
Cowcod	1.2
Yelloweye Rockfish	2.1

Table 2. CDFW Preferred Alternative: California recreational projected mortality of non-overfished species for 2015-2016. Results in parenthesis reflect lingcod mortality with a three fish bag limit.

Species	Projected Mortality (mt)
Black Rockfish	187.3
Blue Rockfish	58.4
Cabazon	37.1
California scorpionfish	81.1
Greenlings	17.8
Lingcod	258.7(311.3)
Minor Nearshore Rockfish North	11.8
Minor Nearshore Rockfish South	352.8
Widow Rockfish	3.6

2015-2016 Adjustments to Existing or Routine Measures

Checklist Item #22: Using underutilized set-asides in the projections for the shorebased IFQ carryover

The Council requested consideration of the likelihood that set asides will be harvested when considering the risk that carryover will cause unacceptable overage. In brief, the GMT looks to set asides together with projections of harvest across all sectors when presenting the inseason

risk analysis to the example. We did so this past March and we recommended that carryover be issued for all species ([Agenda Item D.4.b, Supplemental GMT Report](#)).

We also had hoped to include a more in-depth analysis of the trends and dynamics of carryover here. We have analysis and a simulation approach that demonstrates that carryover will keep catch below the quota pounds (QP) amount issued over a multi-year period except in certain deficit QP usage situations (i.e. the deficit would have to be large enough to offset earlier surpluses in the evaluation period). We have noted multiple times that interpretations of the carryover program have taken implementation away from the original intent ([D.8.b, Supp GMT, June 2012](#), [H.5.b, Supp GMT, September 2012](#), [H.3.b, Supp GMT March 2013](#)). The intent was to issue carryover automatically without the inseason risk decision that is being required now. We would reiterate that the inseason risk analysis involved more workload of the team and NMFS staff than it should. We could not write our analysis up in full by this time and suggest taking it up under discussions of long-term fixes to the carryover.

Under Agenda Item F.4, the Council discussed NMFS's letter on a recent court ruling that states that shorebased IFQ species with $ABC=ACL$ would not be permitted carryover in the 2014 season. This resulted in 19 of 30 shorebased IFQ species being allowed to have carryover. Table 3 shows a breakdown of species with carryover allowed and not allowed for 2014 and the percent attainment for that IFQ species in 2013. Sixteen of 19 species with allowances for carryover had attainment rates of less than 50 percent. Notable species for which carryover was allowed and had attainment greater than 50 percent were Dover sole, shortspine thornyhead, and longspine thornyhead. Of the remaining 11 species that carryover was not permitted for, 8 species had attainment less than 50 percent. Some on the team question the logic of the decision. If that logic is extended and we manage on how much that could theoretically be taken instead of on how much we project/expect to be used, then it would call into question bag and trip limit management. If everyone that was eligible to take the full trip and limits did, then catch would exceed the levels we were managing to.

Table 3. Percent Attainment of Sector Quota for Shorebased IFQ species in 2013 permitted and not permitted for carryover in 2014. (Generated from NOAA West Coast Groundfish IFQ Application on 06/22/2014 10:47 AM)

IFQ Species	Sector Quota (lbs)	Total Catch (lbs)	Percent Attainment
<i>Carryover Permitted</i>			
Bocaccio rockfish (S of 40° 10')	165,126	28,332	17.16%
Canary rockfish	87,964	22,526	25.61%
Cowcod (S of 40° 10')	2,205	486	22.04%
Darkblotched rockfish	587,976	256,485	43.62%
Dover sole	49,018,682	17,583,083	35.87%
Longspine thornyheads (N of 34° 27')	4,100,267	2,400,808	58.55%
Minor shelf rockfish (N of 40° 10')	1,119,948	65,686	5.87%
Minor shelf rockfish (S of 40° 10')	178,574	44,443	24.89%
Minor slope rockfish (N of 40° 10')	1,712,835	431,244	25.18%
Other flatfish	9,236,501	1,767,468	19.14%
Pacific cod	2,480,830	339,657	13.69%
Pacific halibut (IBQ) (N of 40° 10')	236,660	72,707	30.72%
Pacific ocean perch (N of 40° 10')	241,241	108,062	44.79%
Sablefish (N of 36°)	4,030,050	4,080,318	101.25%
Sablefish (S of 36°)	1,327,800	200,064	15.07%
Shortspine thornyheads (N of 34° 27')	3,054,183	1,825,663	59.78%
Shortspine thornyheads (S of 34° 27')	110,231	8,150	7.39%
Widow rockfish	2,191,016	907,513	41.42%
Yelloweye rockfish	2,205	139	6.30%
<i>Carryover Not Permitted</i>			
Arrowtooth flounder	8,479,264	5,365,841	63.28%
Chilipepper rockfish (South of 40° 10')	2,423,983	870,774	35.92%
English sole	14,032,486	486,273	3.47%
Lingcod (N of 40° 10')	2,695,305	749,955	27.82%
Lingcod (S of 40° 10')	1,089,993	36,814	3.38%
Minor slope rockfish (S of 40° 10')	829,181	258,778	31.21%
Pacific whiting	216,707,790	215,218,208	99.31%
Petrable sole	5,110,315	4,695,933	91.89%
Splitnose rockfish (S of 40° 10')	3,346,838	101,757	3.04%
Starry flounder	1,656,774	7,705	0.47%
Yellowtail rockfish (N of 40° 10')	5,809,905	1,585,755	27.29%

Nonetheless, we see little practical effect of this latest carryover policy for most species. Because attainment is so low, there is likely little interest in receiving the carryover QP. The carryover may matter to some individual operations, but on the whole, if people cannot use the QP issued for the year, then they will not be looking to use the surplus from the prior year. Carryover is most beneficial for stocks where attainment levels are high.

Based on this new ruling, the GMT suggests that the Council may need to re-examine how ACLs are calculated as the court ruling is different from the past approach of rely on ACL/ABC/OFL projections.

Checklist Item #23: Non-trawl trip limit adjustments for lingcod N. of 40°10' N. lat. (increase), slope rockfish N. of 40°10' N. lat. (decrease), bocaccio S. of 34°27' N. lat. (increase), and shelf rockfish S. of 34°27' N. lat. (increase)

The GMT comments on #23 will be forthcoming in GMT Report 3.

New Management Measures for Implementation in 2015-2016

Checklist Item #25: Establish New RCA Coordinates for 300 and 350 fathom boundaries

At the April 2013 meeting, the Council requested "... trawl RCA boundary alternatives at 300 fm and 350 fms for analysis." The regulatory definition of trawl gears includes bottom trawl and midwater gears, and as such, the GMT analyzed the impacts of implementing depth closures for bottom trawl gears targeting Dover sole, thornyheads, and sablefish, and midwater gears targeting Pacific whiting (i.e., shorebased IFQ and at-sea). The available analysis can be found in Agenda Item F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2.

Expansion of Seaward of RCA Boundaries

Depth-based management tools for bottom trawl gears include RCAs to control catch of species, for example, target species, bycatch species, and overfished species. Currently, the shoreward boundary is 100 fathoms and the seaward RCA boundary from 48°10' to 45°46' N. latitude is 150 fathoms and 200 fathoms from 45°46' to 40°10' N. latitude. The GMT was only able to conduct a cursory exploration of the impacts of expanding the RCA to 250 fathoms, based on the data summarized in Agenda Item F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2.

However, that analysis of impacts does capture the essential difference between leaving the area open and closing out to 250 fm in terms of roughey impacts. Likewise, it should be easy to understand the difference in magnitude of the implications from placing the RCA line at 250 fm and closing everything beyond 100 fm without knowing exactly what species might be caught and in what amounts. This is unlikely to be predicted with a high degree of certainty regardless, since we have never had occasion to use such measures in conjunction with the IFQ fishery.

Substantial reductions of roughey rockfish would be expected if fishing were prohibited from the 100 fathom shoreward boundary to a seaward 250 fathom (Table 1, Agenda Item F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2). From 2002-2012, 75 percent (105 mt) of roughey were caught on observed hauls from 150 fathom to 250 fathom. In that same time period, 37 percent of the observed bottom trawl hauls occurred in bottom depths from 150 to 250 fathom (Table 3, Agenda Item F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2). Changes in target species catch per unit effort (CPUE) and overfished species bycatch rates, as a result of expanding the seaward RCA boundary to 250 fathom would also be expected though there was insufficient time for analysis.

Future analysis should also consider analyzing only 2011-2012 data, years in which the bottom trawl sector was rationalized as different patterns may be evident.

New Management Measures - 300 and 350 fathom RCA

It is the GMT's understanding that the proposal to establish new coordinates approximating the 300 and 350 fathom depth contours were intended to provide options for reducing encounters with rougheye rockfish. Under this scenario, fishing would be allowed from 300/350 fathoms to 700 fathoms. Approximately 94 percent of observed hauls occurred in the area 150 to 300 fathoms and 97 percent from 150 to 350 fathoms, a substantial disruption to fishing operations (Table 3, Agenda Item F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2). Under this scenario, new fishing opportunities and target strategies would need to be explored from 300/350 fathoms to 700 fathoms. Changes in target species CPUE and overfished species bycatch rates, as a result of expanding the seaward RCA boundary to 300/350 fathoms are also expected though there was insufficient time for analysis.

Application of the 300 and 350 fathom Line to Midwater Gears

Currently, the only depth-based management tool available for the Pacific whiting sectors are called Bycatch Reduction Areas (BRA), since vessels are allowed to fish in the trawl RCA during the primary whiting season (i.e., the trawl RCAs do not apply). BRA apply to vessels on Pacific whiting trips using midwater gear during the primary whiting season and prohibit fishing shoreward of the 75, 100, and 150 fathom depth contours (see regulations at 660.131(c)(4) Subpart D). BRAs are automatic actions implemented by NMFS when NMFS projects that a sector will exceed an allocation for a non-whiting groundfish species specified for that sector before the sector's whiting allocation is projected to be reached.

For 2015-2016, the Council has not proposed sector-specific allocations for rougheye/blackspotted. As such, the criteria for NMFS to use automatic actions for implementing BRAs do not appear to be satisfied. This is in contrast to RCA adjustments for bottom trawl gears which are recommended by the Council and, most typically, implemented through inseason action. The GMT recommends that if the Council is interested in BRAs to control rougheye rockfish catch that they be designated as routine and not as an automatic action.

At-Sea Sectors

Rougheye rockfish catches by depth in depths in areas shoreward of 300 or 350 fathoms can be found in Table 1 of Agenda Item F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2. From 2002-2012, 92 percent of the at-sea hauls occurred in depths shallower than 300 fathoms (Table 3, Agenda Item F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2). As such, it appears that prohibiting fishing shallower than 300 fathoms could result in a substantial disruption of fishing operations compared to historical activities. Changes in Pacific whiting CPUE and overfished species bycatch rates, as a result of concentrating fishing activity on the slope are also expected though there was insufficient time for analysis. Future analysis should also consider analyzing only 2011-2012 data, years in which the at-sea sectors were rationalized as different patterns may be evident. Further, evaluating the individual sectors (e.g., CP and MS) might also be warranted.

Shorebased Midwater Whiting

As noted in Agenda Item F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2, the WCGOP data contained average depth of fishing, instead of bottom depth. As such, the summary of impacts, similar to what was provided above for the at-sea and bottom trawl sector, were not able to be derived.

Summary

Changes in target species CPUE and overfished species bycatch rates are also expected under these management measure proposals but were not able to be analyzed. For example, if deeper areas were closed off to bottom trawling, then effort shifts to more shoreward areas could severely curtail fishery operations due to limited availability of canary and yelloweye quota. Possible changes in revenue, other incidental species (e.g. Shelf Rockfish Complex), effects on port communities, etc. should ideally be explored prior to implementation; however, there was insufficient time to perform these analyses prior to or at this meeting.

The GMT was only able to conduct limited analysis to facilitate decision-making in the time available between the April and June Council meetings. With more time we could have more fully analyzed available catch data to explore the possible effects on target and incidental species from the use of any of the lines, by sector. The GMT anticipates that a detailed consideration of the impacts would be considered in the specific circumstances calling for their possible use.

While some on the team worry about the analysis that could not be done, others emphasize that this was intended to “add tools to the toolbox.” The lines are not for immediate implementation. While recognizing that opportunity for public input on impacts was limited at this meeting and that more analysis could be done, many of the impacts analysis pointed to as shortcomings here could be closely examined if circumstances called for a close look. Likewise impacts could be more carefully and more effectively considered in the specific circumstances calling for their possible use. It is often more useful to compare and contrast impacts against other options available at the time. At this time, we do not have immediate need for the lines. And the impacts of the lines would be speculative. Yet we can say with some confidence that the 300 and 350 fathom lines would reduce bycatch of rougheye more than the existing 250 fm line and cause no more adverse economic consequences than the other tools available in the case that existing lines and tools are insufficient (i.e. a complete closure or a closure out to 700 fm might be necessary). The Council therefore may wish to include the lines for this contingency. In this view, the decision on how much “analysis” is sufficient to justify the policy purpose is not the GMT’s to make.

The GMT also recommends that future efforts attempt to identify more discrete area closures, similar to the rougheye groundfish conservation area analysis, which was moved into the Omnibus prioritization. The Council has successfully implemented yelloweye rockfish conservation areas, for example, in lieu of closing larger areas of the coast.

Checklist Item #26: Non-Trawl: Allow Lingcod Retention in Periods 1, 2, and 6

The GMT will have a statement on item #26 in Supplemental GMT Report 3.

Checklist Item #27: Recreational: Canary Rockfish Bag Limit

In April 2014, the Council forwarded (limited) retention of canary rockfish in the recreational fishery in Oregon only. Retention in California and Washington were eliminated from further consideration at that time. Since April, the GMT attempted to clarify the background information and the analysis.

Under the current regulation of non-retention for canary rockfish, annual impacts from the Oregon recreational fishery are projected to be 3.1 mt, from discard mortality. The analysis indicates that allowing a one fish sub-bag limit (of the 10 fish daily bag limit, no more than one may be a canary rockfish) would increase the annual projected impacts to 8.1 mt, which is 3.6 mt (30 percent) below the preferred alternative Oregon recreational fishery HG of 11.7 mt in 2015. Allowing canary rockfish to be part of the regular bag limit (10 fish), with no sub-limit, is projected to increase impacts to 9.5 mt, still under the Oregon recreational HG by 19 percent.

Concern has been expressed that increasing mortality from the recreational fishery could impact the canary rockfish rebuilding progress. However, the GMT understands that the rebuilding plan assumes that the entire ACL is attained annually. The annual total mortality from the Oregon recreational fishery (and all fisheries) is variable and uncertain; however, the estimated additional catch is within that margin of error around the HG.

The GMT also expressed concern regarding potential for changes in angler behavior that could increase canary rockfish mortality resulting from allowing a one fish bag limit to exceed projections from a bag analysis. Despite these concerns, the GMT is supportive of a one fish bag limit as buffers are in place to accommodate unaccounted for mortality and the capability of ODFW to implement timely inseason action to prohibit retention inseason to curtail accrual of canary rockfish mortality. The GMT notes that this a one fish bag limit will allow for biological sampling of landed catch to obtain otoliths and other pertinent biological information on retained catch to better inform future assessments.

Amendment 24 – Default Harvest Control Rules

Checklist Item #28: Select a final preferred alternative for default harvest control rules that would be used in future bienniums, unless modified by the Council, to establish future harvest specifications

The GMT did not have time to discuss the harvest control rules at this meeting. The GMT continues to support Alternative 3 as being the most reflective of how the Council has operated and will most likely continue to operate in the future.

GMT Recommendations

Subject	Title	GMT Input
Checklist Item #2	Confirm P* and ABCs. Adopt revised 2016 cowcod ABC	Consider revisiting their P* decision for Pacific cod, shortbelly rockfish and yelloweye rockfish
Checklist Item #5	Confirm rebuilding plan parameters including a new T-target for cowcod	No recommendation
Checklist Item #6	Confirm EC species' designations and associated FMP language to be implemented under Amendment 24.	The GMT provides clarification under F.7.b Supplemental GMT Report 2
Checklist Item #9	Confirm or modify amounts deducted from the ACL to account for groundfish mortality in Tribal, non-groundfish fisheries, EFPs and Research.	Revise the set asides to reflect the updates to tribal fisheries The GMT does not recommend increasing the canary rockfish set aside for 2015-2016
Checklist Item #13	Confirm or modify 2-year within non-trawl HGs or within non-trawl shares for 2015-2016.	Consider annual variability and the probability of exceeding the ACL when deciding whether to move 0.6 mt (or less) of yelloweye rockfish from the non-nearshore fishery to the nearshore fishery.
Checklist Item #15	Trawl RCA	The GMT concludes that adverse impacts to EFH would not likely occur by opening, year-round, the petrale cut outs with a year-round 200 fathom-modified line between 40° 10' N. and 45° 46' N. latitude.
Checklist Item #16	Non-trawl trip limits	No recommendation
Checklist Item #20	Season dates, bag limits, length limits, area closures	The GMT recommends the Council consider the revised Final Preferred California Recreational Season and Depth Restrictions as described in the CDFW state report.
Checklist Item #22	Using underutilized set-asides in the projections for the shorebased IFQ carryover.	The GMT suggests that the Council may need to re-examine how ACLs are calculated as the court ruling is different from the past approach of rely on ACL/ABC/OFL projections.

Subject	Title	GMT Input
Checklist Item #23	Non-trawl trip limit adjustments for lingcod N. of 40°10' N. lat. (increase), slope rockfish N. of 40°10' N. lat. (decrease), shortspine thornyhead N. of 34°27' N. lat. (no change) bocaccio S. of 34°27' N. lat. (increase), and shelf rockfish S. of 34°27' N. lat. (increase).	See Agenda Item F.7.b, Supplemental GMT Report 3
Checklist Item #25	Establish New RCA Coordinates for 300 and 350 fm boundaries.	No recommendation
Checklist Item #26	Allow Lingcod Retention in Periods 1, 2, and 6.	See Agenda Item F.7.b, Supplemental GMT Report 3
Checklist Item #27	Canary Rockfish Bag Limit	The GMT is supportive of a one-fish sub-bag limit.
Checklist Item #28	Select a final preferred alternative for default harvest control rules that would be used in future bienniums, unless modified by the Council, to establish future harvest specifications.	The GMT continues to support Alternative 3.

Appendix A. Historical Nearshore Rockfish Catches.

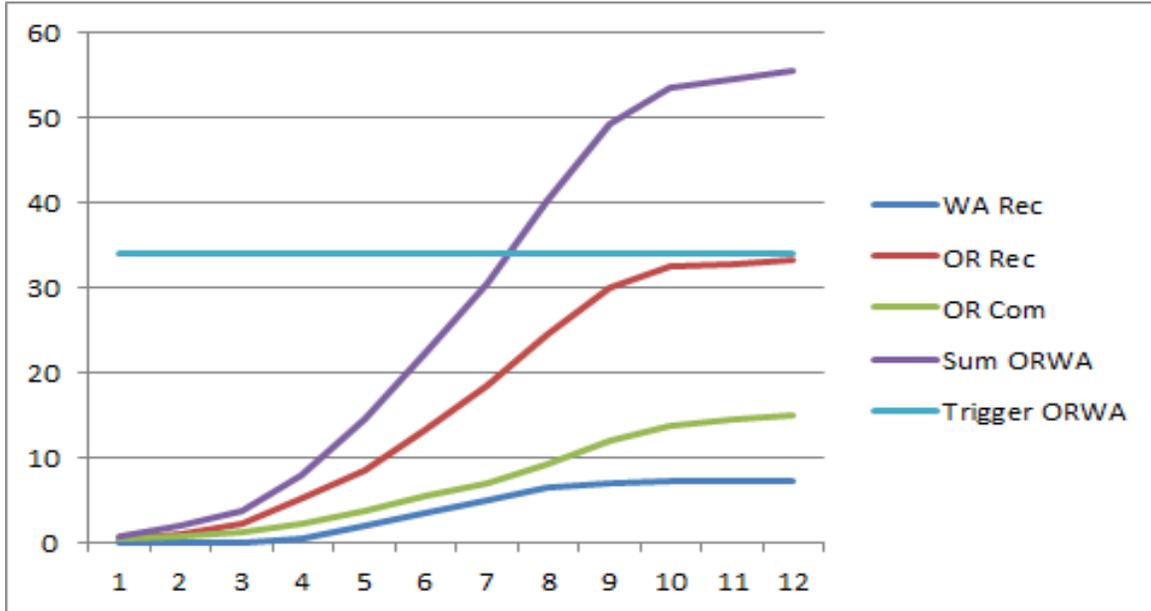


Figure 2. Average monthly cumulative Nearshore Rockfish complex mortality in the Washington and Oregon fisheries from 2008-2012 compared to trigger proposed in the WDFW/ODFW state report.

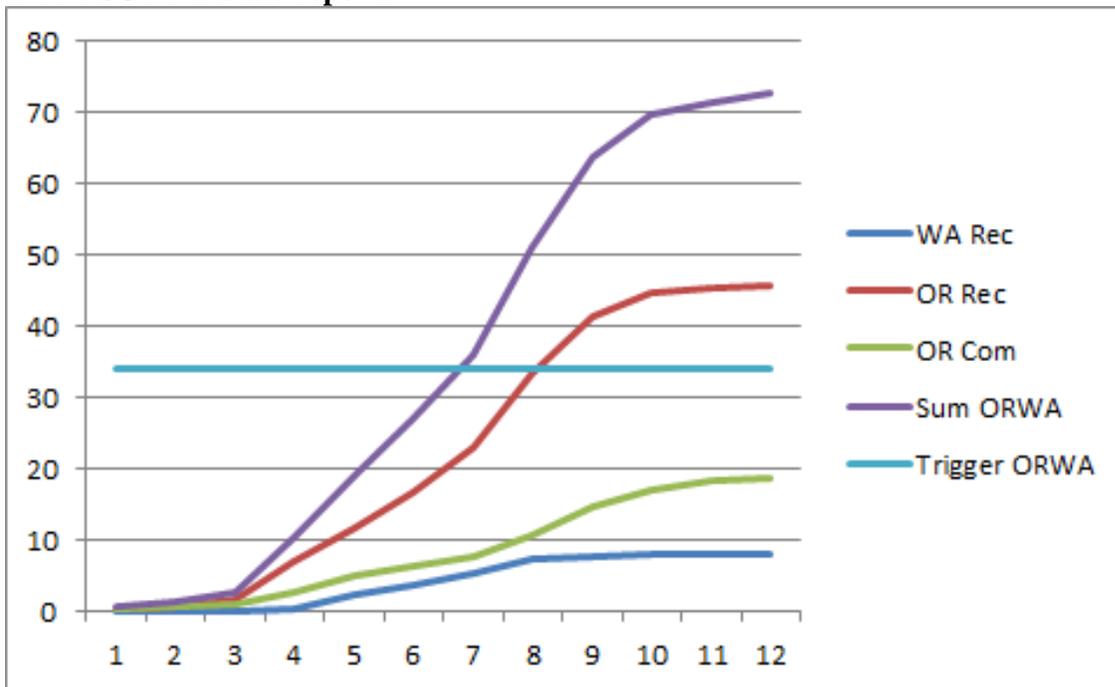


Figure 3. Average monthly cumulative Nearshore Rockfish complex mortality in the Washington and Oregon fisheries from 2012 compared to trigger proposed in the WDFW/ODFW state report.