

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to discuss progress of this year's fishery and possible inseason adjustments. The GMT discussion was led by Mr. Bob Leos. The GAP offers the following recommendations and comments on proposed inseason adjustments to ongoing groundfish fisheries.

First, the GAP has a couple requests regarding sablefish. As many of you are aware, the sablefish market has been trending down since the end of 2011 due to many market factors.

For instance, sablefish competes with other seafood proteins such as Chilean farmed salmon in Japan, which also is the primary market for West Coast blackcod. In the marketplace, Chilean salmon is much less expensive than sablefish, which also has led to lower Japanese consumption of blackcod, with severe ramifications for West Coast fishermen and processors. Other issues, such as the Japanese economy, also have prompted lower sablefish prices.

Based on discussions with fixed-gear fishermen and a current average price of around \$1.85 a pound, the GAP feels requesting an increase for both the daily-trip-limit (DTL) and open access fisheries north of 36° N. Latitude is warranted. The low price has forced fishermen into other fisheries and has discouraged fishing to the point where it is cost-prohibitive to even leave the dock for such low monthly limits. In order to offset expenses or make it worthwhile to fish, an increase in volume is necessary.

The table on the next page extracts landings from the [PFMC Sablefish by Area Report: Historical Catch for all Hook and Line gear \(except Troll\)](#). It clearly shows the downward trend of sablefish landings through the same time each year, May, for this year and the previous five years. The low landings so far in 2013 (305.2 mt) demonstrate how dramatically hook-and-line landings have fallen when compared to past years.

Data caveats:

- The data below is for north of 40° 10' only.
- This table does not separate the open access from limited entry hook-and-line landings.
- It does not include pot and trap landings, as some of the links to those reports were broken.
- January, February and March are closed to the tier fishery.

Table 1. Sablefish hook-and-line historical catch through May of each year (all numbers in metric tons).

	Year	Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Area totals
	2013	Vancouver	3.1	1.5	34.1	79.2	54.4	172.3
		Columbia	0.7	1.5	8.9	27.2	28.3	66.6
<i>North of 40° 10'</i>		OR coast	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	1.0	9.3
		Eureka	3.1	3.3	12.6	18.7	19.3	57.0
	<i>Totals</i>	6.9	6.3	55.6	133.4	103.0	305.2	
	2012	Vancouver	2.9	2.9	41.0	119.6	86.8	253.2
		Columbia	3.4	13.3	28.7	75.2	69.0	189.6
		OR coast	0.1	-	-	5.7	0.6	6.4
<i>North of 40° 10'</i>		Eureka	8.1	9.7	15.7	53.0	38.1	124.6
	<i>Totals</i>	14.5	25.9	85.4	253.5	194.5	573.8	
	2011	Vancouver	3.5	3.7	32.6	97.1	121.1	258.0
		Columbia	5.7	10.9	17.4	95.7	118.4	248.1

		OR coast	0.0	0.0	13.4	39.5	5.1	58.0
North of 40° 10'	Total s	Eureka	9.9	4.6	6.0	16.4	48.3	85.2
			19.1	19.2	69.4	248.7	292.9	649.3
	2010	Vancouver	0.5	2.9	44.0	112.9	99.0	259.3
		Columbia	0.5	3.3	19.0	81.1	164.6	268.5
		OR coast	0.0	0.0	1.5	44.0	4.6	50.1
		Eureka	2.3	9.2	17.1	32.5	49.7	110.8
North of 40° 10'	Total s		3.3	15.4	83.1	314.5	322.5	738.8
	2009	Vancouver	2.0	3.3	12.5	131.2	47.3	196.3
		Columbia	3.2	6.0	8.9	191.2	206.7	416.0
		OR coast	0.0	0.0	0.0	79.1	3.0	82.1
		Eureka	9.4	14.8	19.9	44.1	64.9	153.1
North of 40° 10'	Total s		14.6	24.1	41.3	445.6	321.9	847.5
	2008	Vancouver	1.1	0.8	68.1	120.4	47.0	237.4
		Columbia	0.0	2.8	13.9	73.8	82.2	172.7

		OR coast	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	33.1	33.2
		Eureka	0.4	7.7	14.4	37.9	54.7	115.1
<i>North of 40° 10'</i>	<i>To tal s</i>	1.5	11.3	96.4	232.2	217.0	558.4	

Limited Entry Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery North of 36° N. Latitude, DTL fishery

Daily-trip-limit fishermen have requested an increase in trip limits for sablefish for the balance of the year. The GMT analyzed 3 options, which included status quo. The GAP supports **GMT Alternative 2, (1 landing per week of up to 1,050 lb., not to exceed 3,150 lb. per 2 months)** This alternative leaves a sufficient buffer (est. 91% take) but still allows for a small opportunity to make a few extra dollars in what has been a very difficult market this year. The DTL in the limited entry fixed gear fishery north of 36° may be adjusted at the September or November Council meeting if it appears the fishery is approaching the harvest guideline.

Open Access Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery North of 36° N. Latitude, DTL fishery

Open access representatives on the GAP have requested exploring the possibility of an increase in trip limits for sablefish for the remainder of the year. Open access fishermen are currently working with a very narrow profit margin due to high fuel prices, poor sablefish prices and low trip limits. The GMT analyzed 3 options, which included status quo. The GAP supports **GMT Alternative 1, (300 lb. per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 800 lb., not to exceed 1,600 lb. per 2 months)** Though this alternative has a higher attainment estimate (94%) the GAP believes sablefish effort will actually be lower due to the salmon fishery reopening from mid-July through September. The salmon market is strong while the sablefish market is weak; thus the GAP believes fishermen who would normally target blackcod will fish for the more lucrative salmon. The GAP believes the 6% buffer is adequate. **Although a 200-pound increase may seem like a small increase, it will go a long way to help cover expenses for open access fishermen.**

Based on the information in the table, showing the downward trend in landings, the GAP believes the Council can adopt GMT Alternative 1 without risk of exceeding the annual catch limit or open access harvest guideline.

Limited Entry Fixed Gear South of 34° 27' N. Latitude

Minor Shelf Rockfish South: The GAP recommends an increase in the Minor Shelf Rockfish South cumulative landing limit from 3,000 lbs/2 months to **4,000 lbs/2 months beginning as soon as possible (period 4?) through the end of the year.** The GAP notes that there are no conservation issues with shelf rockfish and this will reduce regulatory discards while providing some economic relief to the few fishermen in this sector who fish south of Pt. Conception. The GAP notes that this same proposal was approved by the Council in June 2012.

Bocaccio: The GAP recommends an increase in the bocaccio cumulative landing limit from 300 lbs/2 months to **500 lbs/2 months beginning as soon as possible (period 4?) through the end of the year.** The GAP notes that there is an adequate buffer in the scorecard and this will reduce regulatory discards. Again this same proposal was approved by the Council in June 2012.

Open Access Fixed Gear South of 34° 27' N. Latitude

Bocaccio: The GAP recommends an increase in the bocaccio cumulative landing limit from 100 lbs/2 months to **200 lbs/2 months beginning as soon as possible (period 4?) through the end of the year**. Open access fixed gear fishermen have been encountering greater numbers of bocaccio in the last year in the nearshore fishery in the southern California bight. Again there is an adequate buffer in the scorecard and this increased limit will reduce regulatory discards.

Limited Entry Fixed Gear North of 34° 27' N. Latitude

Shortspine Thornyhead North: Limited Entry fixed gear fishermen north of Point Conception have been hard hit financially due to the soft Sablefish market. Further exacerbating these financial impacts has been the virtual elimination of the directed Blackgill rockfish fishery south of Cape Mendocino. Slope rockfish trip limits of 40,000 lbs/2 months that could have been all Blackgill in 2012 have now dropped down to a limit of 1,375 lbs/2 months for Blackgill in 2013. In past years when the market was soft for thornyheads or Sablefish, fixed gear fishermen were able to target Blackgill to help buffer the financial hit but that option is no longer available.

LE fixed gear fishermen north of Point Conception are seeking regulatory relief in the form of an increased trip limit for shortspine thornyhead from the current trip limit of 2,000 lbs/2 months up to **2,500 lbs/2 months to begin on September 1, 2013 through the remainder of the year**.

Lastly, the GAP notes that we did review the supplemental public comment from the Port San Luis Commercial Fishermen's Association request for an increase in nearshore limits. The GAP realizes that due to the late receipt of this request the GMT will be unable to analyze the potential impacts to overfished species at this meeting. This may be analyzed before the September Council meeting and we may act then. The GAP notes that this same proposal was rejected last year due to possible impacts to overfished species, namely Canary rockfish.

Lingcod Surplus Carry-Over in the Limited Entry Trawl Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Fishery

The GAP reviewed the NMFS report under Agenda Item F.9.b that laid out a short term solution to address the lingcod split for surplus carryover during 2013. The GAP agrees with this NMFS recommendation .

Summary of GAP recommendations

1. Limited Entry Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery North of 36° N. Latitude, DTL

GMT Alternative 2, (1 landing per week of up to 1,050 lb., not to exceed 3,150 lb. per 2 months)

2. Open Access Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery North of 36° N. Latitude, DTL

GMT Alternative 1, (300 lb. per day, or 1 landing per week of up to 800 lbs., not to exceed 1,600 lbs. per 2 months)

3. Limited Entry Fixed Gear South of 34° 27' N. Latitude

Increase Minor Shelf Rockfish South cumulative landing limit from 3,000 lb/2 months to 4,000 lb./2 months beginning as soon as possible through the end of the year.

Increase Bocaccio South cumulative landing limit from 300 lb./2 months to 500 lb./2 months beginning as soon as possible through the end of the year.

4. Open Access Fixed Gear South of 34° 27 N. Latitude

Increase Bocaccio South cumulative landing limit from 100 lb./2 months to 200 lb./2 months beginning as soon as possible through the end of the year.

5. Limited Entry Fixed Gear North of 34° 27 N. Latitude

Increase shortspine thornyhead north cumulative landing limit from 2,000 lb./2 months to 2,500 lb./2 months to begin on September 1, 2013 through the remainder of the year.

PFMC

06/23/13