

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INITIAL ACTIONS FOR SETTING 2015-2016 AND BEYOND GROUND FISH FISHERIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the items in the briefing book under this agenda item, participated in joint discussions with the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and provides the following comments.

Proposed Overfishing Limits and Potential Acceptable Biological Catches for 2015 and 2016 Groundfish Fisheries

The GMT reviewed the tables in Attachment 1 under this agenda item. Since recommending the overfishing limits (OFLs) is the purview of the SSC, the GMT does not have comments on the values in the table. We do note that the Minor Nearshore Rockfish North and Minor Nearshore Rockfish South complexes in Table 1 have “NA” as the OFL for brown, China, and copper rockfishes. The complex totals in the table do not include any value for those species with NAs. Therefore, when the OFLs for brown, China, and copper rockfishes are recommended by the SSC, the complex totals will need to be adjusted.

Management Strategy Evaluation for Rebuilding Revision Rules

The GMT received an overview from Dr. Andre´ Punt on his proof of concept paper on a management strategy evaluation for rebuilding revision rules (Attachment 2) and had a joint discussion with the SSC. Based on the discussion with the SSC, the GMT believes this concept is worth pursuing. Dr. Punt has requested input from the GMT on the range of scenarios to be considered in the analysis and intends to dedicate time at our October meeting to this topic. It is our understanding that Dr. Punt may wish to participate in that October discussion. The GMT welcomes his input and will continue to work with Dr. Punt and the SSC on this issue.

Revisions to Council Operating Procedure 9

The GMT reviewed a revised version of Council Operating Procedure 9 (COP 9) in the June Briefing Book at the June Council meeting. However, we did not have time to fully flesh out our thoughts and recommendations. Since the June meeting, the GMT has had the opportunity to further review and discuss the version of COP 9 in the September Briefing Book (Agenda Item G.7.a, Attachment 3) and provide the following additional thoughts.

In June, the GMT expressed concern with the portion of the COP that is being proposed as criteria for determining whether management measures should be considered in the biennial harvest specification and management measures analysis or analyzed in a separate process considered by the Council at the June meeting in even years. In June, the COP 9 language said eligible new management measures were only those needed to address conservation concerns. The GMT thinks the revised COP 9 criteria in the September briefing book (Agenda Item G.7.a, Attachment 3) which states “Council will provide initial fishery management guidance, including a preliminary range of new management measures necessary to keep catch within the annual catch limits (ACL) or address a habitat or protected resource concern” is an improvement.

The Council may wish to fashion these criteria more as strict rules, or more as a flexible standard. The latter would involve the Council having more direct consideration of how a particular item fits within the analysis, timing, workload, etc. Such discussions might take more time, and it can be difficult to apply standards consistently and fairly. A stricter rule, on the other hand, could be more quickly and consistently applied, with the downside that it might be overly restrictive in certain cases.

If the Council wishes to go with a stricter set of criteria, we recommend there be some discussion of what the criteria would be. For instance, it was unclear to some of us why habitat issues would be included. Some habitat issues might require extensive analysis. As it is now, the proposed criteria imply that by law or some policy that certain issues receive priority. The Council may want to discuss these criteria.

If the Council wishes to go with a more flexible approach, then additional language might be added to this section to allow the Council to have additional discussion on what management measures could be analyzed in the biennial process on a case by case basis. Some items may be better evaluated within the suite of alternatives in the biennial analysis but might not fit into the proposed criteria. The Council could consider adding more flexible language such as, “the Council may include other management measures if the timing or information presented in the harvest specifications would improve the efficiency of the analysis, implementation, or otherwise aid the Council’s consideration.” As it is now, one major limitation on what could be included comes from the scope of what has been previously and adequately analyzed in the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or elsewhere. And like now, consideration of additional analysis workload would be a major consideration in deciding whether to include a specific management measure in the analysis.

If the Council decides to adopt the proposed language in COP9, the Council may wish to consider the language “... keeping catch within the ACL...” and whether it might be better to revise the language to “... keeping catch within a specification.” The term, specification, is defined in groundfish regulations (50 CFR 660.10) and includes annual catch targets, fishery harvest guidelines (ACL less tribal, research, groundfish mortality from non-groundfish fisheries, and EFPs), allocations, area apportionments, harvest guidelines (e.g., recreational HG for overfished species), etc. New management measures may be needed to keep catch within these specifications, which are broader than simply ACLs, and should be included for analysis during the harvest specification and management measures process.

The GMT also discussed the idea of incorporating the process for the methodology review of groundfish models that are used in the harvest specification and management measure process into COP 9. The Council is currently scheduled to develop a groundfish methodology review process, similar to what is specified in COP 15 for salmon, at the March 2014 meeting (see [Agenda Item H.5.a, Attachment 1 Year at a Glance Schedule](#)). During the model review process for the upcoming 2015-16 biennial process many of the model developers and the SSC reviewers expressed some confusion with the model review process and need for a more defined process. The GMT thinks a separate COP outlining a groundfish methodology review process is a good idea that would address these issues.

COP 9 specifies that the Council will select a range of two-year allocations in November of Year One. Receiving the preliminary Tribal set-aside estimates at this time is needed to establish

those allocations and conduct analyses. In the past the Tribes have then provided their final estimate in June of Year Two. At the June Council meeting, the Tribes proposed to continue with this process ([Agenda Item F.7.b, Supplemental Tribal Comment, June 2013](#)). The GMT supports the Tribal proposal since it has worked well in recent biennial cycles. The COP could be revised to include the timelines for Tribal estimates of catch for the upcoming biennium.

New Management Measures for 2015-2016

The Council has committed to narrowing the scope of management measures for consideration during the biennial processes. As discussed above under COP 9, management measures that are considered “routine”, currently available, or that are necessary to keep impacts within the ACL or address habitat or protected resource concerns are within the limited scope. Trip limits, bag limits, size limits for most species, seasons, and area closures are considered routine or currently available. Any measure that does not meet that criteria or has not been previously analyzed will be considered “new” and will be considered in a separate process beginning in June 2014 (June of even years).

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to adopt a preliminary list of new management measures for consideration during this biennial process. It is a Council policy decision as to which management measures are “in” or “out” of the biennial process. To help the Council prioritize the list of management measures and determine which are “in” and which are “out”, Attachment 1 contains the management measures the GMT has been informed of, so far, and our attempt to determine if they are eligible for the biennial process or should be postponed until the new process beginning in June of 2014. At the October meeting, the GMT will schedule time to review proposed management measures and evaluate the analysis that will be needed. We will provide the Council with more information at the November meeting.

SPR Harvest Rate for West Coast Elasmobranch Species

The GMT reviewed the SSC groundfish subcommittee report on the target spawning potential ratio (SPR) for west coast elasmobranch species. The new SPR of $F_{SPR50\%}$ will produce a spiny dogfish overfishing level (OFL) for 2015 of 2,523 mt, which is 86 percent of the OFL (2,921 mt) under the previous SPR of $F_{SPR45\%}$. Under the new SPR, using the status quo p-star (P^*) of 0.30, the resulting ABC would be 1,731 mt. For some context, the 2014 ABC will be 2,024 mt, while the total mortality from all sectors was approximately 1,200 mt in 2010 and 1,662 mt in 2011 from the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) groundfish mortality reports (Bellman et al, 2011 and Bellman et al, 2012). At this time, since the Council has not provided a range of harvest specifications (e.g., P^* and ABCs), it is uncertain whether there is a need to explore adjustments to existing management measures (e.g., trip limits) or create new management measures (e.g., allocations, shorebased IFQ, etc).

References

Bellman, M.A., A.W. Al-Humaidhi, J. Jannot, J. Majewski. 2011. Estimated discard and catch of groundfish species in the 2010 U.S. west coast fisheries. West Coast Groundfish Observer Program. National Marine Fisheries Service, NWFSC, 2725 Montlake Blvd E., Seattle, WA 98112.

Bellman, M.AA., A.W. Al-Humaidhi, J. Jannot, J. Majewski. 2012. Estimated discard and catch of groundfish species in the 2011 U.S. west coast fisheries. West Coast Groundfish Observer Program.. National Marine Fisheries Service, NWFSC, 27225 Montlake Blvd E., Seattle, WA 98112.

Attachment 1. Table of proposed management measures that the GMT was informed of in time for this statement.

No.	Proposed By	Sector	Measure	Part of 15-16 Biennial Analysis	"New" June 2014 Process	Comment
1	GMT	All	Update coordinates defining RCAs to better approximate depth	X		Housekeeping
2	GMT	Fixed gear	Increase fixed gear trip limits for selected species (e.g., lingcod, slope rockfish, etc.)	X		Trip limit adjustment.
3	GMT	Shorebased Trawl	Depending on harvest specifications and allocations for certain species, IFQ may need to be issued (e.g., dogfish)	X		If IFQ are needed to keep catch within the ACL, it's eligible. However, given workload associated with initial allocations (esp. with a discarded species), it might be best to be done in a separate 2-3 mtg process with implementation for Jan 1, 2015.
4	CDFW/ ODFW/ WDFW	Recreational	Bag limit, season structures, depth restrictions	X		Routine adjustments
5	ODFW/ WDFW	OR/WA recreational	Retention of bottomfish (or lingcod or flatfish) in the recreational all-depth halibut fishery	X		Bag limit change
6	CDFW	Nearshore	Consider making the deeper nearshore rf trip limits the same for south 40°10' - i.e. remove the split at 34°27'. This applies for periods 1 and 3.	X		Trip limit adjustment
7	ODFW	OR recreational	Recreational management line at 50 fm	X		Area closure change
8	ODFW	OR recreational	Consider adjustments to YRCAs	X		RCA adjustment
9	ODFW	Fixed gear	Year-around retention of lingcod by commercial fixed gear fisheries	X		Open season adjustment

No.	Proposed By	Sector	Measure	Part of 15-16 Biennial Analysis	"New" June 2014 Process	Comment
10	ODFW	Commercial	Allow crab pots to be fished by groundfish vessels		X	Allow vessels to participate in the Dungeness crab fishery or retrieve derelict gear while they have groundfish and/or groundfish gear onboard the vessel. Exempt crab gear from this regulation.
11	WDFW	WA recreational	Consider new yelloweye YRCAs	X		New RCA
12	WDFW	WA recreational	Modify depth restrictions	X		Seasonal depth restriction adjustment
13	WDFW	WA recreational	Modify or eliminate boundaries of lingcod closure areas	X		Area adjustment
14	Public	Fixed gear	Increase allocation of canary rockfish for directed OA in CA	X		Allocation
15	Public	Fixed gear	Increase allocation of yelloweye rockfish for directed OA in CA	X		Allocation
16	Public	Nearshore	Add a management line at Año Nuevo (37°07' N lat.) for a possible discrete area from 34°27' to 37° 07' for increased management option for Port San Luis and Morro Bay commercial nearshore fishermen to attain a higher percentage of the ACL of nearshore finfish species		X	New management line, to attain more of the ACL
17	Public	Nearshore	Increase the bi-monthly trip limit to 1,000 pounds of shallow nearshore rockfish in periods 1, 3-6 for commercial nearshore fishermen in the area from 34°27' to 37°07' N lat.	X		Trip limit adjustment

No.	Proposed By	Sector	Measure	Part of 15-16 Biennial Analysis	"New" June 2014 Process	Comment
18	Public	Nearshore	Increase the bi-monthly trip limit to 1,000 pounds of deeper nearshore rockfish in period 1, 3-6 for commercial nearshore fishermen in the area from 34° 27' to 37° 07' N lat.	X		Trip limit adjustment
19	Public	Nearshore	Change season dates for lingcod: Allow for lingcod retention in the LE and OA fixed gear fisheries Dec, Jan, and Feb in OR and CA	X		Season date adjustment
20	Public	Fixed gear	For commercial directed open access groundfish consider allowing fishing from 0 to 40 fathoms	X		Area closure change
21	Public at	Recreational	Retention of canary rockfish in the recreational fishery	X		Bag limit change
22	Public at	Recreational	Recreational long-leader gear outside of 40 fm		X	New gear/fishery--appears to be on its own separate process, though it has been delayed from Nov 13 to Mar 14. On list as a reminder