

## GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON STOCK COMPLEX RESTRUCTURING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) acknowledges that restructuring of some of the current stock complex aggregations merits consideration. However, it is obvious that there are real and immediate financial, staff, and resource constraints that will hinder the ability of the Council and NMFS to develop, analyze, and implement management actions. Therefore, the GAP strongly urges the Council to keep it simple and to focus on issues that make needed improvements.

The GAP also reiterates the need for developing a complete analysis of the environmental and socioeconomic effects of restructuring complexes, including an evaluation of the management implications of restructuring complexes and an analysis of the conservation effects of proposed changes. While it appears there is sufficient information for the Council to take final action on the suite of issues acted upon at the September 2013 meeting, the GAP suggests the Council consider specifically deferring final action on the slope rockfish complexes until the full suite of analyses are available to inform a decision on restructuring the slope rockfish stock complexes. This recommendation seems to align with the NMFS recommendation in Agenda Item H.4.b, Supplemental NMFS Report, November 2013.

### **In or Out of the FMP**

In the spirit of keeping it simple and focusing on those issues that merit action, the GAP recommends that the Council take no action on the issue of whether new species should be added to or removed from the fishery management plan (FMP). In one of their November 2013 reports, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) highlighted that there is no obvious conservation need for action on this issue – “the species considered for reclassification are mainly those in marginal or questionable need of conservation and management. The GMT sees this evaluation as addressing logical inconsistencies more so than pressing conservation risks. The FMP already has and will maintain those stocks most in need of conservation and management attention as ‘in the fishery’” (Agenda Item H.4.b, GMT Report 2, November 2013). There may be a point in the future where the Council has time and resources to take up this housekeeping issue. In the GAP’s opinion, now is not the time.

### **Other Fish Complex**

The GAP reiterates our previous recommendation for restructuring the Other Fish complex. As noted previously, this complex is an assemblage of species with disparate life histories, distributions, co-occurrence in the fishery, and vulnerabilities to overfishing which should not be managed together.

#### Cartilaginous Stocks

The GAP does not recommend managing all cartilaginous species (i.e., sharks, skates, and ratfish) in one complex because of their disparate life histories, distributions, and vulnerabilities. The GAP recommends that skates be managed separately from the other cartilaginous species

(spiny dogfish and ratfish). The GAP does not recommend further subdividing skates into shallow and deep complexes as it would unnecessarily create an additional complex that is not fully supported by the current analyses. Therefore, the GAP is recommending creation of a shark-ratfish complex and a skate complex.

Additionally, the GAP does not recommend an alternative that adds brown catshark to the FMP and complex. Brown catshark is a species not caught in great amounts in any groundfish fishery with a depth distribution far deeper than the trawl fishery can be prosecuted (i.e., deeper than 700 fm), which is the only fishery with any kind of historical bycatch of this species. This is consistent with our recommendation to take no action on the In or Out of the FMP issue.

To correct the November 2013 GMT Report, the GAP has not recommended moving longnose skate from individual management to the skate complex (as erroneously noted on Table 6 of Agenda Item H.4.b, GMT Report, November 2013). The GAP has not previously recommended categorizing soupfin shark as an EC species, but the GAP supports the rationale provided by the GMT for this action. Similarly, and consistent with our advice to take no action on the In or Out of the FMP issue, the GAP recommends leopard shark be categorized as an EC species.

Specifically, the GAP recommends the following Cartilaginous Fish Alternative:

<b>Cartilaginous Fish-Individually Managed Stocks</b>	<b>Shark-Ratfish Complex</b>	<b>Skate Complex</b>	<b>EC Species</b>
Longnose Skate	Spiny Dogfish Spotted Ratfish	Big Skate California Skate	Soupfin Shark Leopard Shark

Finally, if the Council decides to remove spiny dogfish from the complex and manage the stock with stock-specific harvest specifications, then the GAP strongly recommends the use of harvest guidelines as the preferred management tool. The GAP opposes development of spiny dogfish quota shares. The uncertain spiny dogfish catch history makes it very difficult to allocate at the permit level, which would most likely be necessary if this species was managed with quota shares.

Roundfish

The GAP recommends creation of a nearshore (shallow-water) roundfish complex that would include kelp greenling and the Washington Cabezon substock. The GAP does not recommend adding California scorpionfish to the nearshore (shallow-water) roundfish complex.

The GAP previously recommended removing Pacific grenadier and not adding the other grenadier species to the FMP, as well as removing finescale codling (aka Pacific flatnose) from the FMP since the distribution of grenadiers and finescale codling extends far deeper than the 700-fm trawl limit and no fisheries target these species on the west coast. However, to be consistent with our recommendation to take no action on the In or Out of the FMP issue, the GAP recommends categorizing Pacific grenadier and finescale codling as EC species. The GAP reiterates our recommendation to not create a deep-water roundfish complex for these species.

The GAP does not recommend adding California slickhead, a deepwater species, which is distributed deeper than 700 fm and is not targeted on the west coast.

The GAP also does not recommend adding the California and Oregon Cabezon substocks into a new nearshore (shallow-water) roundfish complex. The GAP is satisfied that these stocks are managed well with stock-specific harvest specifications and management measures under state and federal management (e.g., with state trip limits).

Specifically, the GAP recommends the following Round Fish Alternative:

<b>Roundfish – Individually Managed Stocks</b>	<b>Shallow-water Roundfish Complex (coastwide)</b>	<b>EC Species</b>
Cabezon (CA) Cabezon (OR) California scorpionfish Lingcod N and S of 40°10' Pacific cod Pacific whiting Sablefish N and S of 36°	Cabezon (WA) Kelp greenling	Finescale codling Pacific grenadier

### **Slope Rockfish Complex**

The GAP was briefed by Mr. Frank Lockhart about the Supplemental NMFS Report, H.4.b, November 2013 pertaining to minor slope complex stocks. The GAP recognizes that NMFS needs more time to consider and analyze this issue, and that further analysis might better inform Council decision making on this issue. The GAP believes there might be merits to further analysis of this issue. What is most critical to the GAP and the affected industry sectors is ensuring that there is sufficient flexibility in the system to develop management measures, if necessary, that provide appropriate management assurance without unnecessarily constraining fishing opportunities.

The GAP recommends the Council defer action on this issue to provide more time for NMFS to analyze the issue, which would also provide time for NMFS to work with the affected industries to develop a suite of management approaches for Council consideration. Finally, the GAP recommends NMFS (1) provide notice to the fishing industry that contemplation of future management measures for roughey rockfish, blackgill rockfish, and shortraker rockfish is underway and (2) that NMFS is seeking input from the fishing industry about measures (both voluntary and regulatory) that would help to maintain catches of these species within their harvest targets.

PFMC  
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