

**MINOR SLOPE COMPLEX STOCKS WITH CONSISTENT OVERFISHING LIMIT CONTRIBUTION OVERAGES; COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF REORGANIZATION OF BLACKGILL, ROUGHEYE, AND SHORTRAKER ROCKFISH FOR ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS**

At the 2013 September meeting the Council decided (as a preliminary preferred alternative) to defer further consideration of reorganizing nearshore, shelf, and slope species complexes until the 2017-2018 Harvest Specifications cycle. At the September Council meeting, NMFS stated its intent to review this decision and report back to the Council at the November meeting. After further review, the Agency has come to the conclusion that further analysis of removing Blackgill, Rougheyeye, and Shortraker from the minor slope complex is warranted, in addition to management measures that may be analyzed to keep catch of these stocks within their contributory OFLs to the Minor Slope complex. Additional analysis will help the Council in their final decision regarding harvest specifications and management measures in June of 2014.

Although the Minor Slope North and Minor Slope South complexes are divided at 40° 10' N. latitude, combining northern and southern individual stock contributions to the OFL is more informative when determining management performance of these stocks coastwide ([Agenda Item F.8.b, Supplemental SSC Report](#), June 2013). Accordingly, in its review the Agency compared past total mortality with preliminary 2015 OFL estimates for each stock.

Tables 1 and 2, below, demonstrate that mortality of blackgill, rougheyeye, and shortraker rockfish was higher than their 2015 OFL contributions to the minor slope complex in most years since 2004<sup>1</sup>. Although the Agency initially was concerned with aurora rockfish, results from the new category 1 assessment compared with historical total mortality of this species indicate that there is no overfishing trend for this species.

**Table 1:** Comparison of total mortality catch in selected years to preliminary 2015 OFLs for Aurora, Blackgill, Rougheyeye, and Shortraker rockfish. Individual species-specific stock overfishing limit (OFL) estimates are combined coastwide north and south of 40° 10' N. latitude.

<i><b>Minor Slope (Managed N&amp;S, Combined)</b></i>			
<b>Species</b>	Years Over 2015 OFL (2011-12)	Years Over 2015 OFL (2007-12)	Years Over 2015 OFL (2004-12)
Aurora	0/2	0/6	0/9
Blackgill	<b>2/2, 100%</b>	<b>4/6, 67%</b>	<b>5/9, 56%</b>
Rougheyeye	<b>2/2, 100%</b>	<b>5/6, 83%</b>	<b>5/9, 56%</b>
Shortraker	<b>2/2, 100%</b>	<b>6/6, 100%</b>	<b>7/9, 78%</b>

<sup>1</sup> In its review, the Agency utilized data sets developed through the GMT's review of stock complexes. NMFS notes that actual total mortality of Rougheyeye and Shortraker is somewhat higher than in the estimates provided in this supplemental report because an average catch (2007-2012) of 15.16 mt was reported in a Rougheyeye/Shortraker WCGOP data field that has not yet been incorporated into GMT or Agency estimates. This further highlights the need to evaluate management options.

**Table 2:** Comparison of average total mortality catch (mt and percentage of 2015 OFL) in selected years (2007-2012) for Aurora, Blackgill, Rougheye, and Shortraker rockfish. Individual species-specific stock overfishing limit (OFL) estimates are combined coastwide north and south of 40° 10' N. latitude.

	<b>Minor Slope (Managed N&amp;S, Combined)</b>		
	<b>Average TM catch, 2007-2012</b>	<b>2015 OFL</b>	<b>Average TM catch (2007-2012)/2015 OFL</b>
Aurora	49.18	91.7	53%
Blackgill	134.33	141.7	94%
Rougheye	226.16	206	110%
Shortraker	31.66	18.8	168%

- **Blackgill** (A category 2 stock): Historical catches of blackgill rockfish have consistently exceeded the estimated 2015 OFL and should be analyzed for removal or reorganization from status quo complexes. In 2013, harvest guidelines and trip limits were implemented to control fixed gear catch. However, further analysis of single species management may be helpful to the Council when considering decision-making regarding management measures for reducing blackgill rockfish catch.
- **Rougheye** (A category 2 stock): Historical catches of rougheye rockfish have consistently exceeded the estimated 2015 OFL and should be analyzed for removal or reorganization from status quo complexes. The new assessment (and associated 2015 OFL) indicates that historical total mortality could continue to result in an overfishing trend, even though the 2013 assessment indicates that the stock is healthy (>47% unfished biomass).
- **Shortraker** (A category 3 stock): Historical catches of shortraker rockfish have consistently exceeded the estimated 2015 OFL and should be analyzed for removal or reorganization from status quo complexes.

The SSC provided guidance to the Council on stocks where catch regularly exceed OFL contribution values in their April 2012 supplemental statement ([Agenda Item I.3.b, Supplemental SSC Report](#), April 2012):

*"The SSC recommends that for species with OFL contribution values, a comparison of recent catches with those values be used to identify whether stock complexes are working as they were intended. If catches regularly exceed OFL contribution values, this could indicate a problem with how the stock complexes are structured, and justify action in the next management cycle which could include removing the species concerned from the complex and prioritizing it for a full assessment."*

**Conclusion:**

NMFS believes it is important for the Council to analyze removing or reorganizing blackgill, rougheye, and shortraker from the minor slope complexes (north and south). Targeted management measures (such as broad area closures) could reduce catch below the OFL, but may result in unintended impacts on other target species attainment and sectors, while also resulting in additional regulatory complexity. Management measures applied to address blackgill, rougheye, and shortraker contribution OFL overages without removing or reorganizing slope rockfish complexes may be unnecessarily disruptive. SFD endorses efforts to reduce regulatory complexity coupled with increased individual accountability.