

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PRELIMINARY  
MANAGEMENT MEASURE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE 2011-2012 WASHINGTON  
RECREATIONAL GROUND FISH FISHERIES

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held public meetings on December 10, 2009; February 11, 2010; and March 31, 2010 to develop and discuss recreational bottomfish proposals for 2011 and 2012. The intent of the proposed preliminary alternatives is to maintain low levels of incidental catch of overfished rockfish, primarily yelloweye, when anglers are targeting halibut and lingcod, while providing for quality recreational fishing experiences.

Depth restrictions have been used for several years to keep the fishery focused in shallower water, which is expected to increase survivability of released rockfish. There is also expected to be a reduced encounter rate of yelloweye rockfish in shallower depths (i.e., 30 fathoms or less).

We are considering reducing the bottomfish aggregate bag limit of 15, which includes a sublimit of 10 rockfish and 2 lingcod, but does not include halibut (which has a daily bag limit of 1). Retention of canary and yelloweye rockfish would continue to be prohibited, regardless of area caught, and all of the current recreational yelloweye rockfish conservation areas (YRCAs) would remain in place.

Based on the input provided, WDFW supports the following preliminary management measure alternatives for the recreational fishery to be approved for public review by the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

**Coastwide (Marine Catch Areas 1-4)**

Status quo seasons and bag limits for lingcod and rockfish would remain in place. There would be two options for the bottomfish aggregate bag limit:

Option 1 – (*status quo*) – Bottomfish aggregate bag limit of 15 fish.

Option 2 – Reduce bag limit to 12 fish, which would accommodate rockfish limit plus two.

and two options for a sublimit for cabezon:

Option 1 – (*status quo*) – Cabezon are subject to the aggregate bottomfish limit, but do not have a separate sublimit.

Option 2 – Specify a sublimit of one cabezon per angler per day.

For these items, WDFW does not have a preferred option at this time.

### **North Coast (Marine Catch Areas 3 and 4)**

Option 1 (*status quo*) – Prohibit retention of bottomfish seaward of 20 fms from May 21 through September 30, and seaward of 20 fms in Area 4B year-round, except on days halibut fishing is open; cannot fish for, retain, or possess bottomfish or halibut in C-shaped YRCA.

Option 2 (*preferred*) – Prohibit retention of bottomfish seaward of 20 fms from June 1 through September 30 in Areas 3 and 4A, and seaward of 20 fms in Area 4B year-round, except on days halibut fishing is open; cannot fish for, retain, or possess bottomfish or halibut in YRCA.

### **South Coast (Marine Catch Area 2)**

Option 1 (*status quo*) – Prohibit retention of all bottomfish seaward of 30 fms from March 15 through June 15, except sablefish and Pacific cod retention is allowed May 1 through June 15; no retention of bottomfish, except lingcod, during primary halibut season; no retention of lingcod south of 46 deg. 58' and seaward of 30 fms on Fridays and Saturdays from July 1 through August 31; and cannot fish for, retain, or possess bottomfish or halibut in South Coast YRCA and Westport Offshore YRCA.

Option 2 (*preferred*) – Same as Option 1, except allow rockfish retention seaward of 30 fms from March 15 through June 15.

### **Columbia Area (Marine Catch Area 1)**

Minimal amounts (i.e., less than 0.1 mt) of yelloweye and canary rockfish are caught in Marine Catch Area 1; therefore, WDFW proposes to keep the status quo bottomfish fishing regulations in place through 2011 and 2012.

WDFW believes that the range of management measure alternatives presented above is sufficient to stay within the state harvest targets for yelloweye and canary. Regardless of which options are chosen, we are committed to monitoring our catch inseason and will take action as appropriate. In the event that we are projected to exceed our state harvest target, we will consult with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding our inseason harvest estimates to compare our projected catches with our joint harvest guidelines for yelloweye and canary rockfish. We will have another public meeting in early May to review and solicit input on the proposed alternatives.