

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to discuss possible inseason adjustments. The GMT discussion was led by Mr. Dan Erickson. The GAP offers the following recommendations and comments on proposed inseason adjustments to ongoing and 2015-2016 groundfish fisheries.

California Recreational Fishery

Black Rockfish

Recent data indicates recreational effort in 2013 and 2014 for black rockfish is much higher than in previous years, and higher than was accounted for in the proposed 2015-2016 management specifications. With this higher effort there is a chance that the recreational allocation of black rockfish may be exceeded. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has recommended implementing a 5 fish sub-bag limit of black rockfish within the overall 10 fish total bag limit for rockfish, cabezon, and greenling (RCG complex). This 5-fish sub-bag limit is projected to keep mortality within allowable limits. The GAP supports this recommendation.

California Scorpionfish

California Department of Fish and Wildlife implemented an emergency closure on November 15, 2014 for both recreational and commercial scorpionfish fishing statewide due to projected attainment of the annual catch limit (ACL) of California scorpionfish. A higher than projected impact in the recreational fishery occurred due to an unexpected increase in targeting and effort. The ACL in 2015 will be decreasing from the current 117 mt down to 114 mt, thus modifications to the recreational fishery will be necessary to keep mortality within allowable limits.

Therefore, the GAP is recommending the Council consider closing the California recreational scorpionfish fishery for the months of September, October, November, and December. This option is preferred by the majority of southern California commercial passenger fishing vessel operators. Even with this option, some transfer of the commercial allocation to the recreational sector will be required to maintain the fishery. Recent catch history in the commercial sector has been one of very low attainment of scorpionfish. It is also hoped that better inseason catch accounting for the recreational fishery may be established to better inform the fishery of any potential problems that might be occurring.

Limited Entry Trawl Fishery

Finally, the GAP urges National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to ensure that there are sufficient quota pounds in accounts on January 1, 2015 to prosecute fisheries. In previous years we have run into problems when there is not enough quota to prosecute trawl fisheries (this has occurred with both whiting and halibut in the non-whiting trawl fishery). The GAP urges NMFS to populate quota share accounts with the largest amount of quota pounds that they can to ensure no interruption to fishing activities.