

PROPOSED MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2001

Situation: In response to harvest reductions in 2000, the Council adopted a new management approach that included gear restrictions and seasons. Several provisions required implementation through emergency federal regulations. For 2001, substantial restructuring of the groundfish management program may be necessary to implement the rebuilding programs, achieve bycatch reduction mandates, keep total catch within the proposed harvest levels, and achieve optimum benefits to the various user groups and fishing communities. Lower harvest levels have been proposed for several important stocks in 2001, bycatch concerns have been expressed, and there appears to be widespread displeasure with regulations that require fishers to discard valuable fish. In June, Council members suggested there may not be year-round groundfish fishing opportunities for all commercial vessels, and individual vessels may be restricted to substantially reduced fishing periods.

Several management measures (such as recreational bag limits and most commercial trip limits) have been designated as routine measures that may be established or adjusted at a single Council meeting. Additional measures were defined as routine in the 2000 groundfish emergency rule and Amendment 13, including certain seasons, area closures, and gear restrictions. However, in order to alert the public of possible changes, the Council should develop specific management options at this meeting to help focus public attention on the extent of changes that may be necessary. Both open access and limited entry management proposals must be developed. A major goal would be to selectively harvest more abundant groundfish species without impacting overfished and depleted stocks.

Canary and cowcod rockfish have been designated as overfished, and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) has proposed very low optimum yields (OYs) to initiate the rebuilding plans. For cowcod, which are taken in both recreational and commercial fisheries, it may be possible to close certain areas and achieve most of the needed protection. Trip and bag limits may also be appropriate. Canary rockfish are distributed more widely and caught by a variety of fishing sectors coastwide, including pink shrimp trawls and recreational fisheries. Canary rockfish is a shelf species, and the rebuilding plan will likely result in curtailed fishing on many shelf species. Methods to selectively harvest yellowtail rockfish, flatfish, and other species without canary bycatch should be discussed. In addition, widow rockfish and darkblotched rockfish may require rebuilding plans and reduced fishing impacts. Reduction of darkblotched rockfish catch may require changes to management of fisheries on the continental slope, such as the Dover sole, thornyheads, and trawl-caught sablefish (DTS) complex fishery.

The Ad-Hoc Allocation Committee Report (Exhibit G.4.b) proposed a range of management approaches for 2001. The GMT considered these proposals at its August and September meetings. The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) began meeting Sunday, September 10 to address these issues. Both advisory entities will likely have suggestions for Council consideration.

NMFS has informally told the Council that, in addition to the overall harvest levels, individual management measures must now be addressed in the environmental assessment for the annual harvest specifications. This is likely to be a substantial workload increase. Therefore, the Council should be selective in choosing the management options to be considered in November.

Council Action:

1. Identify specific options for 2001 (final action in November).

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit G.4.b, Ad-Hoc Allocation Committee Report.
2. Exhibit G.10.c, Public Comment.

PFMC
08/28/00