

PRELIMINARY HARVEST LEVELS AND OTHER SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2001

Situation: Each year, the Council recommends harvest specifications for the upcoming year. This is a two-meeting process that begins with the Council making preliminary recommendations at the September meeting and final recommendations at the November meeting. The fishery management plan (FMP) requires the Council to establish reference points for each major species or species group: an acceptable biological catch (ABC), an optimum yield (OY), and overfishing threshold. In addition to the OYs, some species are allocated between the open access and limited entry fisheries. Tribal and recreational fisheries must be addressed, and the Council must make recommendations relating to foreign fishing and processing opportunities for Pacific whiting and shortbelly rockfish. (FMP Amendment 12 will eliminate the need to discuss foreign fishing after this year.)

Process for Developing Preliminary ABC and OY Recommendations

Draft assessment documents, Stock Assessment (STAT) Team summaries and Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel reports were mailed to Council family and others in August 2000. (**Please bring your copies to the meeting.**) Oral summaries of each new assessment, including the scientific conclusions, will be presented at a special briefing Monday, September 11, at 2:30 p.m. in the Sierra A Room. Assessment authors and other scientists will be available at that time to answer technical questions. **This information will not be presented again during the formal Council session on this topic.** The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) will present its ABC and OY recommendations during the Wednesday Council session. After deciding the preliminary ABC and OY recommendations, the Council will need to decide any changes to the list of species and species groups that are allocated between limited entry and open access fisheries. Management measures to achieve the harvest targets will be discussed later in the meeting.

Preliminary Assessment Results and Other Recommendations

Stock assessments were prepared in 2000 for darkblotched rockfish, lingcod (coastwide), widow rockfish, Pacific ocean perch (POP), and yellowtail rockfish. New ABC recommendations will result from these assessments. In addition, at its June 2000 meeting, the Council endorsed lower default harvest rates for groundfish stocks. The lower default harvest rates result in lower GMT harvest recommendations for several stocks that were not assessed this year. The Council announced it will consider phasing in some of the reductions, especially for stocks currently believed to be above their maximum sustainable yield (MSY) biomass levels (B_{MSY}).

The GMT met with STAR Panel, STAT Team, and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) members in early August to review the new assessments and scientific advice. The GMT developed several preliminary ABCs and OYs based on those discussions (Exhibit G.6, Attachment 1). The GMT also calculated preliminary ABCs using the new default harvest rates for every stock with enough information. For comparison, the year 2000 ABCs and OYs are provided in Exhibit G.6, Attachment 2.

Limited entry and open access allocation shares are based on landings during the limited entry window period. In the northern area, the open access allocation is based primarily on groundfish harvest in the pink shrimp fishery. In the southern area, the open access allocation share reflects groundfish harvest by set net gear during that period. The set net fishery now catches only a small fraction of the open access share, while other gear types expanded substantially during the 1990s. The geographic distribution of open access harvest has undoubtedly changed, along with the species composition of the catch. However, much of the harvest, especially in California, was recorded as generic *Sebastes* rockfish. Division of the rockfish complex into slope, shelf and nearshore components has made it difficult to establish allocation shares that match both the current and historic harvest patterns. The GMT is attempting to develop options for Council consideration so that each sector has access to its fair share.

Revised Discard Estimates

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has prepared a preliminary analysis of discarding, as observed during the Oregon Enhanced Data Collection Program (Exhibit G.6, NMFS Report). In order to establish landed catch targets for various stocks and for various fishing sectors, the Council subtracts anticipated discards from the total catch OY. New information in this analysis should be considered in this process. In addition, this observer program analysis will be useful in designing future observer programs for west coast groundfish fisheries. NMFS will present an oral summary of the report.

Council Action:

1. **Recommend preliminary ABCs and OYs for 2001.**
2. **Recommend preliminary tribal allocations.**
3. **Provide guidance to GMT regarding species allocations between limited entry and open access sectors and identify options.**
4. **Develop preliminary recommendations for domestic annual processing, joint venture processing, and total allowable level of foreign fishing for whiting and shortbelly rockfish.**

Reference Materials:

1. Staff summary of Preliminary GMT ABCs and OY Recommendations for 2001 (Exhibit G.6, Attachment 1).
2. Year 2000 ABCs and OYs (Exhibit G.6, Attachment 2).
3. A Preliminary Analysis of Discarding in the 1995-1999 West Coast Groundfish Fishery (Exhibit G.6, NMFS Report).

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