

PROPOSED MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2002

Situation: Management measures adopted during the Council process are designed to implement new and existing 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. In the last two years the Council has implemented a substantial restructuring of the groundfish fishery that includes gear restrictions, seasons, and dramatically lower harvest levels consistent with previously-approved rebuilding programs for overfished species. In January 2001, widow and darkblotched rockfish were declared overfished by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). It is likely that NMFS will declare yelloweye rockfish overfished early next year based on the 2001 assessment of that species. In response, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) recommends reduced optimum yields (OYs) for lingcod, Pacific ocean perch, yelloweye rockfish, and rockfish in the "other" and "minor *Sebastes*" complexes in 2002. Groundfish fisheries operating on the slope and targeting the Dover sole/thornyhead/trawl-caught sablefish complex are expected to be similarly constrained to protect declined darkblotched rockfish and to avoid future declines of sablefish. Two new assessments of the West Coast sablefish stock north of Pt. Conception indicate the need to consider reduced harvest of sablefish to avoid this stock being declared overfished in the near future. There are other new stock assessments and updated rebuilding analyses that may compel the Council to consider adjusting further harvest level and other management measure adjustments for 2002.

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. A major goal would be to selectively harvest more abundant groundfish species without impacting overfished and depleted stocks. Both open access and limited entry management proposals will need to be considered for the commercial sector, as well as adjustments to existing recreational fisheries.

The Ad Hoc Allocation Committee Report (Exhibit C.7, Supplemental Attachment 1) is expected to propose a range of management approaches for 2002. The GMT and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) will begin meeting on Monday, September 10 to consider these proposals. Both advisory entities will likely have additional suggestions for Council consideration.

There are two pieces of public correspondence regarding management measures designed to reduce fishing mortality on depleted rockfish (Exhibit C.7.d, Public Comment 1). The first, from Mr. Bill Perkinson of Los Osos, California, encourages the Council to lift the sport rockfish "closure" in Morro Bay. The second, an email transmission received at the Council office from Mr. Steve Edwards, laments the effect of rockfish-directed management measures on the fishing communities in Ventura County, California. A third comment letter from the West Coast Seafood Processors Association (Exhibit C.7.d, Public Comment 2) displays the change in Council-adopted, allowable harvest levels of the major groundfish species from 1996-2000.

Council Action: Adopt proposed 2002 management measures for public review (final action in November).

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit C.7, Supplemental Attachment 1, Ad Hoc Allocation Committee Report.
2. Exhibit C.7.d, Public Comment 1.
3. Exhibit C.7.d, Public Comment 2.

Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan (GFSP) Consistency Analysis

The GFSP supports making the necessary allocation decisions so that fishery participants can plan on a specific share of future OYs (Sec. II.A.1(3)) and establishing an allowable level of catch that prevents

overfishing while achieving optimum yield based on best available science (Sec. II.A.2). The GFSP envisions choices made by the Council on 2002 management measures at this stage in the process would be consistent with these criteria.

The GFSP also supports establishing and maintaining a management process that is transparent, participatory, understandable, accessible, consistent, effective, and adaptable (Sec. II.C). The Council process of adopting specific proposed management measures at this September meeting would be consistent with these GFSP principles.

PFMC
08/29/01