

FINAL HARVEST LEVELS FOR 2002

Situation: Each year, the Council recommends harvest specifications for the upcoming year. This year, the task remains a two-meeting process that began 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 complex: 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, limited entry, tribal, and recreational fisheries.

Developing Final Harvest Levels

Preliminary harvest levels (ABCs and total catch OYs) were adopted at the September Council meeting. A range of preliminary harvest levels was adopted for six stocks (darkblotched rockfish, Dover sole, Pacific ocean perch, sablefish-north of Point Conception, shortspine thornyhead, and widow rockfish) with preferred alternatives adopted for five of these six stocks (all except shortspine thornyhead) (Exhibit C.3, Attachment 1). The Council task at this point is to decide the final harvest levels for next year. An analysis of alternative harvest levels relative to the alternative season structures adopted in September and alternative bycatch and discard assumptions is available in the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR) of Proposed 2002 Groundfish Acceptable Biological Catch and Optimum Yield Specifications and Management Measures for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery (Exhibit C.4, Supplemental Attachment 1). After deciding the final harvest levels, the Council will need to decide any changes to the list of species and species complexes that are allocated between limited entry and open access fisheries. Management measures to achieve the harvest targets will be discussed during the Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday Council sessions with a final decision scheduled for the Friday Council session under agenda item C.4. Multiple sessions for deciding management measures were scheduled to allow the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) time to consider specific options and modified proposals from the Council before a final decision is rendered.

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 a variety of open access gears. The small recommended OYs in 2002 for yelloweye rockfish and other stocks declared overfished or estimated to be in the "precautionary zone" may require consideration for a reallocation between sectors and/or areas from the harvest sharing plan decided for 2001 fisheries.

Rationale for Bycatch and Discard Estimates

The methodological approach for estimating bycatch and discard was reviewed and discussed by the GMT and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Groundfish Subcommittee at a joint meeting in Santa Cruz, California on September 25 (Ancillary A, GMT minutes, with additional detail in the EA/RIR). The SSC is expected to review this material and prepare a statement regarding the methodological approach for estimating bycatch and discard rates and the application of those rates in developing final harvest levels and management measures for 2002.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has prepared analyses of bycatch and discard rate estimation methodologies consistent with the conceptualized approach agreed to at the joint GMT/SSC Groundfish Subcommittee meeting in Santa Cruz. This NMFS analysis will consist of a range of alternative bycatch and discard rate estimates and can be found in the EA/RIR (Exhibit C.4, Supplemental Attachment 1). In order to establish landed catch targets for various stocks and for various fishing sectors, the Council applies bycatch rates of key overfished stocks (those that constrain fisheries and are segregated in the data sources used to estimate bycatch and discard rates) within target fishing strategies. Trip and cumulative landing limits are then determined in an iterative process based on allocation and other decisions relative to proposed management measures by applying bycatch rates and tracking anticipated discards (based on bycatch rates and landing limits) from the total catch OY. The NMFS analysis compares current bycatch and discard assumptions with alternatives and provides a rationale for considering alternatives. The EA/RIR provides a range of bycatch rate estimates for constraining stocks to develop trip limit tables and specifications assuming variable bycatch rates and season structures.

The Council task is to decide final ABCs, adopt the bycatch and discard rates applied to each fishing strategy, and final species allocations between 2002 commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries. The Council is advised to review the EA/RIR before deciding these final specifications because final management measures are sensitive to harvest levels, applied rates of bycatch and discard, and allocation. Depending on which fishing strategy the Council adopts under agenda C.4, the bycatch and discard rates will be somewhat different. The Council may want to anticipate how these specifications (and uncertainty relative to bycatch and discard rate ranges) affect management measures and then weigh potential economic and conservation risks and benefits before deciding these specifications. The final task for this agenda item is to decide the final allocations between commercial (including limited entry and open access sectors), tribal, and recreational fisheries. Preliminary allocations were adopted at the September meeting, but the GMT has developed projections that may warrant reconsideration by the Council. For example, the Council adopted 11 mt coastwide as a preliminary total catch OY for yelloweye rockfish, with a preliminary allocation of 2 mt to commercial fisheries and 9 mt to recreational fisheries. Since then, the GMT has received tribal catch projections of 1.5 mt - 2 mt of yelloweye rockfish for 2002 tribal fisheries.

Council Task:

- 1. Adopt final ABCs and total catch OYs for 2002.**
2. Adopt bycatch and discard rates.
3. Adopt final species allocations between commercial (including limited entry and open access sectors), tribal, and recreational fisheries.

Reference Materials:

1. Alternative Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and Total Catch Optimum Yield (OY) Recommendations for 2002 for the Washington, Oregon, and California Region (Exhibit C.3, Attachment 1).
2. 2001 Specifications of Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Optimum Yields (OYs) and Limited Entry and Open Access Allocations, by International North Pacific Fisheries Commission (INPFC) Areas (Exhibit C.3, Attachment 2).
3. Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review of Proposed 2002 Groundfish Acceptable Biological Catch and Optimum Yield Specifications and Management Measures for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery (Exhibit C.4, Supplemental Attachment 1).

Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan (GFSP) Consistency Analysis

The GFSP supports establishing an allowable level of catch that prevents overfishing while achieving OY based on best available science (Sec. II.A.2). 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 harvest levels and other specifications is consistent with these GFSP principles.

PFMC
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