

MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2002 AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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 adopted harvest levels, and achieve optimum benefits to the various user groups and fishing communities. In January 2001, widow and darkblotched rockfish were declared overfished by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). In September 2001, the Council approved new rebuilding analyses for coastwide lingcod, Pacific ocean perch, and darkblotched rockfish to complement existing rebuilding analyses for bocaccio, canary rockfish, cowcod, and widow rockfish. 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) recommended reduced optimum yields (OYs) for lingcod, Pacific ocean perch, yelloweye rockfish, and rockfish in the "other" and "minor *Sebastes*" complexes in 2002. Additionally, 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. Groundfish fisheries operating on the slope and targeting the Dover sole/thornyhead/sablefish (DTS) complex are expected to be constrained to protect declined darkblotched rockfish (in the case of DTS trawl fisheries) and to avoid future declines of sablefish.

In response to the above information, the Council adopted a range of acceptable biological catches and OYs for various stocks at the September Council meeting. The Council also adopted the Ad Hoc Allocation Committee's recommendations for allocation of groundfish stocks within fishing sectors as well as the management principles, data quality concerns, major management challenges, and alternative management strategies that should be considered for 2002. Additionally, the Council adopted a range of seasonal and year round options for 2002 commercial groundfish fisheries. The Council also adopted several recreational fishery options to limit next year's harvest of select overfished rockfish stocks.

In addition to the normal analysis of options, the Council assigned the GMT and the Groundfish Subcommittee of the Scientific and Statistical Committee to more fully investigate the bycatch and discard rate assumptions used in setting groundfish management measures. The Council directed that an Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR) of management measure options be developed with a full analysis presented to the Council prior to a final vote on 2002 management measures. The EA/RIR, which analyzes the potential biological and socioeconomic impacts of these various management options, provides thorough analyses of the key issues facing the Council in deciding 2002 management measures for the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery (Exhibit C.4, Supplemental Attachment 1).

The scope of alternatives analyzed in the EA/RIR is adequately broad to permit Council flexibility for considering new approaches to managing 2002 Pacific Coast groundfish fisheries. This agenda is spread throughout the week to facilitate continuous narrowing of alternatives to a single set of management measures. Council deliberations of 2002 management measures are scheduled to begin on Tuesday, with checkpoints on Wednesday and Thursday before a final decision on Friday. This strategy is designed to allow the Council opportunities to assign analyses to the GMT and GAP in order to consider potential permutations of management alternatives analyzed in the EA/RIR.

Council Action: Adopt final 2002 management measures.

Reference Materials:

1. 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).
2. Public Comment Letters, (Exhibit C.4.c, Public Comment 1).

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 in September as a framework for decision making at the November meeting represents considerable progress towards consistency with these GFSP principles. A three meeting process for decision making on management measures, currently planned for next year, will constitute improved consistency.

PFMC
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