

PRELIMINARY HARVEST LEVELS AND OTHER SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2003

Situation: Each year, the Council recommends harvest specifications for the upcoming year. This year, the task remains a two-meeting process that begins with the Council making preliminary recommendations at the June meeting and final recommendations at the September 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, OYs for some species are allocated between the open access, limited entry, tribal, and recreational fisheries.

Stock assessments were prepared in 2002 for bocaccio and canary rockfish (Exhibit C.2, Attachments 1 and 2, respectively). An expedited stock assessment update of last year's sablefish assessment was also done this year (Exhibit C.2, Attachment 3). Outlooks for bocaccio and canary rockfish are more pessimistic this year with evidence of poorer recruitment and stock productivity than originally determined. In contrast, the sablefish assessment update indicates recent recruitments were better than determined in last year's assessment.

New rebuilding analyses were also prepared this year for bocaccio, canary rockfish, yelloweye rockfish, widow rockfish, and Pacific whiting (Exhibit C.3, Attachments 1-5). The new shelf rockfish (bocaccio, canary rockfish, and yelloweye rockfish) rebuilding analyses reveal a more pessimistic outlook for these species. These species have recommended harvest levels much lower than previously considered. The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) considered these new assessments and analyses as well as the scientific advice of assessment scientists to develop a range of alternative harvest levels for species with new assessments and those declared overfished by the National Marine Fisheries Service (Exhibit C.4, Attachment 1). These harvest levels will have dramatic impacts on the types of management measures available for Council consideration in 2003 (Exhibit C.8).

Recommended alternative harvest levels for overfished species vary probabilities of rebuilding within the maximum allowable time (T_{MAX}) from 50% to 80%. The sablefish harvest level alternatives are based on two different assumed states of nature that affect future recruitment and productivity. A third alternative is based on a more conservative exploitation rate that projects increased spawning biomass in the next ten years. Recommended harvest levels for all other species and complexes are the same as specified for 2002.

Council Action:

1. Adopt proposed specifications for public review.

Reference Materials:

1. Table 2-1. Acceptable biological catch (ABC) and total catch optimum yield (OY) alternatives for 2003 for the Washington, Oregon, and California region (metric tons) under the GMT-proposed alternatives (Exhibit C.4, Attachment 1).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. Preliminary Estimates of Acceptable Biological Catch, Optimum Yield, and Economic Analysis
- c. Recommendation of the States, Tribes, and Federal Agencies
- d. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- e. Public Comment
- f. **Council Action:** Adopt Proposed Specifications for Public Review

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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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