



Oregon

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DATE: February 13, 2003

TO: Interested Citizens

FROM: Patricia Burke, Manager
Marine Resources Program
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

RE: **Results of February 7, 2003 Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting
on Nearshore Groundfish Harvest Cap for 2003**

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) was directed by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) to review the adequacy of the new lower harvest cap for nearshore groundfish fisheries. The Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) and the OFWC adopted a one year harvest level equal to that of the year 2000 for the 2003 fishing season. This cap applies to both commercial and recreational fisheries, based on their respective landings in 2000. There are four categories, each of which has a separate harvest cap: 1) black rockfish and blue rockfish; 2) nearshore rockfish (13 species); 3) cabezon; and 4) greenling. This earlier action applied trip limits to black rockfish/blue rockfish and the nearshore rockfish categories. No 2003 trip limits are yet in place for cabezon or greenling.

ODFW staff analyzed the fisheries and projected harvest for this year under the year 2000 harvest caps. Staff also projected harvest rates for a 20% and 50% reduction in the year 2000 harvest caps. All categories of harvest caps were achieved earlier in the year under the 20% and 50% reduction scenarios. Under the year 2000 cap alone, all recreational nearshore fisheries are projected to be under the cap for 2003. Commercial nearshore fisheries are projected to have early harvest attainments for black rockfish /blue rockfish, cabezon and greenling. Greenling has the highest proportional reduction in harvest total from previous years (over 60% reduction) and is projected to achieve the cap by August, with no change in fishing behavior from 2002.

After review of all conservation measures introduced for 2003 in the nearshore fishery, and the staff analysis of the harvest caps, the OFWC gave staff the following guidance in preparation for final decision-making at their March 21, 2003 commission meeting in Newport:

- 1.) No consideration of further reductions in the 2000 cap is needed. (Thus a previously noticed public meeting in Mid-March to discuss further reductions in the 2000 cap is not needed and has been cancelled.)

- 2.) Track the likelihood of a nearshore "derby" fishery taking place and discuss with the public. The OFWC expressed a preference against managing for a derby (fish out and close fishery early vs. extending the season), but wanted staff to obtain feedback from the public including fishermen and processors/buyers. If data indicates a derby is underway prior to adequate public input, the OFWC authorized the staff to put an emergency rule in place to limit harvest until final decisions can be made.
- 3.) Obtain public feedback on establishing in-season trip limits or season-length driven limits for the commercial nearshore fisheries as appropriate. OFWC will make a decision on in-season management at the March 21 meeting.
- 4.) OFWC encouraged staff to look at alternative management tools that are based on the life history of the fish, geared towards size of fish, time of spawn, maturation rates etc.
- 5.) Keep the commercial minimum cabezon size limit at 16", but review the need for a slot limit for future regulations. (The recreational limit is now 15", but is projected to be raised to 16" for the 2004 season).
- 6.) Review gear conflicts with pot gear in the nearshore and bring recommendations to a future OFWC meeting.
- 7.) Have OFWC attorney investigate methods that would allow immediate action to limit additional new entry/access to the commercial black rockfish / blue rockfish nearshore fishery.

As a result of the OFWC direction, ODFW staff will be conducting a public meeting in Gold Beach on Wednesday, February 19, 2003 . At this meeting we will discuss the current status of the commercial fishery and preferences on setting trip limits and/or season changes for the commercial nearshore fishery.

Please don't hesitate to contact Mark Saelens or Bill Barss with questions:
541-867-4741.

Thank you for your interest in our nearshore fishery management.

Year 2000 Cap & 20% Lower Cap
Nearshore Public Meeting @ Garibaldi
Tuesday, 1-28-03

The following is a summary of statements made by participants about a harvest cap on Oregon nearshore marine species:

Year 2000 Cap

1. Sport fisherman:
 - a. Grateful for ODFW commission's conservative approach.
 - b. A 10-fish bag limit is low for sport fishers coming from the valley.
2. Sport fisherman: Keep a 1-year cap and review the results before changing limits.
3. Sport fisherman: Try the 2000 cap and then review the results of the cap before changing.
4. Favored the 2000 limit cap. With tremendous amount of feed in the ocean, he felt we should be allowed to fish this year and then see how well the 2000 cap works.
5. Charter boat operator: The 2000 cap is conservative enough.

Cap 20% Lower than Year 2000

1. The process has worked to reach a cap based on the harvest in the year 2000. We don't need a further cut.
2. Sport fisherman or charter operator: Further reduction in sport bag may result in high grading (result in discard mortality). Wait for black rockfish assessment before considering cuts.
3. Sport fisherman: Reductions now are okay if it keeps stocks (healthy) for the future. Commission has been too late in acting to protect the nearshore.
4. Sport fisherman: The 2000 cap is a good starting point, and we should proceed with care before reducing more. Consider N-S or area management. Factor in the new 2003 sport bag limit reductions by the Council first. We need to know the results of the assessments. Hook and line fishery is not likely to destroy a reef. Consider gear restrictions to limit long line hooks and number of lines per commercial boat.
5. Charter boat operator: A 10-fish bag is marketable, while a reduction would be hard to sell. Consider pre-planned closures that are predictable if needed.
6. Sport fisherman: A reduction in sport limits will have negative impacts on the economy coastal communities.
7. Sport fisherman: Favors conservative harvest, but wants to maintain economic health. A decrease on sport harvest will be hard on charters. The state needs to get the data needed to make good management decisions, but there is no source of funding to do this. User fees depend on a healthy fishery and good harvest. With a restricted harvest less money is coming in for research.
8. Sport fisherman: He didn't see why ODFW commission had to be more conservative than

PFMC.

9. Charter boat operator: We should not consider a reduction in the sport bag when the problem was caused by a large increase in commercial catch of live fish.
10. If the south coast has a problem, don't cut the north coast.
11. Sport Charter: Hardly any fish species to target any longer.

In-Season Adjustments

1. Sport fisherman: If a few species were showing problems, then deal with those species.

Other Comments:

1. Hook and line fishing has never damaged stocks. The fish have always been in my area, and since dragging (trawl) has been removed, my area is now better.
2. Commercial fisherman:
 - a. Most of the commercial catch has been produced from Rogue R. Reef and Port Orford (reef), and the catch continues to go up in the south.
 - b. The north half of the state has lots of fish, and some parts of the coast have not been fished hard and can still produce good catches of cabezon.
 - c. Sport catch and effort records should be looked at with regard to stock status.
 - d. Cutting caps arbitrarily is not warranted: shooting in the dark
3. Sport fisherman: It is unfair to compare us with California where stocks were overfished. Parts of California have good fishing weather all year while storms keep us off the ocean.
4. Sport fisherman: Recent major reduction of commercial fishing on lingcod resulted in healthy lingcod stocks.
5. Sport fisherman:
 - a. Would like to see catch information for earlier years.
 - b. Would like to see ODFW look at catch trends from north vs south.
 - c. Doesn't like commercial trap, longline and stick-gear.
6. Charter boat operator: The ocean is now healthy with plenty of bait, etc.
7. Sport fisherman: Twenty-five years ago sport fishers had to ask for a marine sport bag limit.
8. Commercial fisherman:
 - a. Cabezon is a valuable commercial fish (\$5/lb live), and it is not an important sport fish.
 - b. Cabezon are caught with fixed gear and are not easily caught on jigs.
 - c. This individual stated that he took 20% of the statewide Cabezon harvest with pot gear in 2002. Stated that most other fish are coming off southern reefs. May need local regulation.
9. A geographical analysis might be very important.

Summary of Suggestions from Garibaldi Meeting:

The Year 2000 Cap:

Keep the 2000 cap for one year, and then review the results and the results of assessments before changing cap.

A 20% Reduction in the Year 2000 Cap:

Most attendees opposed a reduction from the year 2000 cap.

Do not reduce the 10-fish sport bag. (Smaller bag limits will be hard for charters to sell and high grading of black rockfish may occur). Let the new lower bag limit work.

In Season Adjustments:

Don't cut limits for the north coast if the problem is in the south coast.

Only reduce limits on species showing problems.

Other:

Analyze catch on a geographical bases (Look at catch trends from north vs south).

Wait for black rockfish assessment before considering any cuts to black rock catch.

Look at catch from earlier years.

**Year 2000 Cap & 20% Lower Cap
Nearshore Public Meeting @ Port Orford
Thursday, 1-30-03**

The following is a summary of statements made by participants concerning a harvest cap on nearshore marine species:

Year 2000 Cap

1. Commercial fisherman: We are not only faced with reduction in vessels but also an unreasonable (2000) cap.
2. Commercial fisherman: Why did ODFW push for the cap at year 2000 catch at PFMC?
3. Commercial fisherman: With these caps we can't afford to fish.
4. Commercial fisherman: A 2000 level cap will not produce a living wage if you divide the 2000 cap by 70+ boats.
5. Several commercial fishermen challenged the need for the 2000 cap and wanted the state or council to make more pounds available this year. The PFMC member in attendance assured them that it was unlikely that the Council would reverse this decision and that the state cannot set regulations that are weaker than the federal government.

Cap 20% Lower than Year 2000

1. After discussion and comment, the room was polled and no one was in favor of a 20% reduction in the cap. A few attendees did not vote.
2. Commercial fisherman: A low cap will force us to fish on black rockfish.
3. Commercial fisherman: With reductions, I will have to eliminate my crewman.
4. Individual: The Commission is not being sensitive to the severe economic downturn in coastal communities.
5. Need to get results of cabezon and black rockfish assessments to apply meaningful regulations.

Inseason Adjustments

1. Commercial fisherman:
 - a. Many boats with nearshore permits may not fish this year, so if we have a low catch can't the trip limit increase?
 - b. Can we increase the caps?
2. Commercial fisherman: We should be able to adjust our trip limits on a monthly basis.
3. Fish buyer:
 - a. There will not be enough live fish for the market if the fishery ends at the end on June.
 - b. He wanted to know when a 2 or 3-month trip limit would be put into place.
 - c. Buyers need a known supply and known commodity every month to keep in business.

4. Fish buyer: We need a year around fishery at some level for the market. He suggested less fishing when fish are spawning.
5. Commercial fisherman: Are fish being caught before limits are set counted [towards cap]? [yes]
6. Commercial fisherman: Derby fishing will cause us to take safety risks, and someone should be accountable.
7. Commercial fisher: He was concerned that stopping landings would destroy markets, because you can't close a fishery for an extended period.
8. Commercial fisher: He wanted ODFW to close open access fishing on black and blue rockfish. He felt more new people were going to fish from other states for these species.
9. Elected official: They wanted to know what trip limits we would have if we reduced boats to 1999 levels.
10. Buyer: He would like to see a 2-month limit to stretch the season to 10 months, to the end of October and the ability to change limits if needed. No derby fishery.
11. Commercial fisherman: He wanted a livable quota for a few months (derby), then he could do something else the rest of the year.
13. Commercial fisherman: He wanted to get the quota and quit.
14. Commercial fisherman: He suggested a 500 pound 2-month limit on greenling.
15. Fish buyer: He did not think the fleet would want a daily trip limit.
16. Commercial fisherman: Limit gear (number of lines on boats and # hooks on long lines etc.) Put a slot limit on cabezon (15-16" to 26") and greenling (13") to protect young and large spawners.

Other

1. Commercial fisherman: The north coast is against us because of 1-fish pot guy fishing in the north.
2. Commercial fisherman : With logbooks and information you have collected, ODFW should be able to see how fishing is effecting stocks. Are the fish getting smaller?
3. Elected official: Concerned that assessment is being done when information was taken while ocean productivity was low.
 - a. We are still restricted on coho salmon.
 - b. There are a lot of fish out there now, but ODFW manages using the rear view mirror approach.
 - c. Very concerned about the employment picture for Curry County.
4. Fish buyer: You will put a buyer out of business before the fishermen.
5. Commercial fisherman:
 - a. There is lots of "trout" (greenling) and we are fishing only 1/3 of their territory.

- b. ODFW qualified too many vessels for nearshore permits. Annual renewal requirements are too lenient.
 - c. The fishers have only recently figured out how to fish for greenling.
6. PFMC member:
 - a. The council is looking for industry proposals to keep catch under the cap.
 - b. PFMC would like a proposal that allows the fleet to make money.
 7. Commercial fisherman: What is the status of IFQ's? With IFQ's, we could catch fish when we wanted to.
 8. PFMC: IFQ's were illegal in past. We are now waiting for changes in the Magnuson Act.
 9. Elected official: What are our options on how many fish you can catch? And when are fish the most valuable?
 10. Buyer: When fish landings are low, the value is highest.
 11. What happens to all the data ODFW collects?
 12. Commercial fisherman: We need to make enough for our boats and crews.
 13. Elected official: We need to have the maximum poundage for the longest possible time.
 14. Commercial fisher: What can we do for our families? We are drying up.
 15. Commercial fisherman:
 - a. You took away our main money-maker which was Canary rockfish.
 - b. The ocean is now very healthy, the best he has seen in 25 years of fishing. There are bait balls, birds, and pelicans have just left (late in the year).
 16. Commercial fisher: He supports a Nov. 1999 qualifying date for nearshore permits.
 17. Citizen wanted to stop new open access fishers from fishing off Oregon.
 18. Elected official asked us to send out a meeting summary.
 19. Consider allocation: more blacks and blues to sport and cabezon and greenling to commercial.

Summary of suggestions from the Port Orford Meeting:

The Year 2000 Cap:

Need to get assessment information

Some feel more poundage could be handled by the fishery and opposed the 2000 cap.

Many were supportive of the 2000 cap considering it is a one year action until the assessments are completed.

A 20% Reduction in the Year 2000 Cap:

It was unanimous that no one favored a 20% reduction from the 2000 cap.

In Season Adjustments:

Establish a 2-month limit to stretch the season to 10 months (through October 31st).

Take action to control the early season fishery by a trip limit or other means, otherwise, those now fishing unrestricted are taking fish off the top of the cap and away from all of us.

To save the market, the fishery must extend beyond the end of June.

Provide a year around fishery at some level for the market, but with less fishing when fish are spawning (winter-spring).

Want ability to increase limits if the catch was low.

Want ability to adjust our limits on a monthly basis.

Establish a 500 pound 2-month limit for greenling.

Fill the quota and quit.

Do not have a daily trip limit.

Do not have a derby fishery, because it will cause us to take risks.

Consider cabezon/greenling size slots

Other:

Reduced boats to 1999 levels if it produces reasonable limits.

Stop new open access fishers [from out-of-state] from fishing off Oregon.

Close open access fishing on black and blue rockfish.

Increase the cap.

Explore quota management (IFQ's)



FEB 18 2003



NOTICE TO FISHERMEN & PROCESSORS

PFMC

Public Workshop

In-Season Adjustments for the Commercial Nearshore Groundfish Fishery

Wednesday, February 19, 2002

Senior Center
29841 Airport Way
Gold Beach, OR
6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Background: The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is seeking input on in-season management options for commercial nearshore fisheries. ODFW has met with users several times to understand concerns and potential solutions stemming from the lower harvest cap for the 2003 nearshore fishery. The recreational nearshore fishery will not require inseason management changes. However, for the commercial nearshore fishery, the projections show early attainment of the new harvest cap for greenling, cabezon and black rockfish/blue rockfish. This workshop will gather public comments on further commercial fishery management options for Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission (OFWC) consideration to help insure an orderly nearshore fishery within the lower harvest cap. The OFWC will consider commercial nearshore in-season management options at it's Friday, March 21, 2003 meeting in Newport, Oregon.

Meeting Agenda:

1. Review of the Commission's comments on nearshore harvest cap from the February OFWC meeting.
2. Public comments and discussion on in-season management options for the Oregon nearshore fishery.

Contact: For additional information, contact Mark Saelens, or Bill Barss, ODFW Marine Resources Program in Newport at (541) 867-4741.

