

**GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
 STATUS OF 2005 GROUND FISH FISHERIES AND CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON
 ADJUSTMENTS**

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed updated commercial and recreational landings information and considered options for inseason adjustments.

LIMITED ENTRY TRAWL

The GMT reviewed inseason estimates of landed catch and total mortality through period 2 and compared those estimates to trawl bycatch model projections. The estimated total mortality of overfished species in the bottom trawl fishery does not appear to be a concern based on PacFIN's Quota Species Monitoring (QSM) data and trawl model projections. The trawl bycatch model was predicting catch levels within 10% of reported landed catch for sablefish, Dover sole, and petrale sole, while trawl caught shortspine thornyhead was 11.4% below trawl model projections, and longspine thornyhead was less than half of projected landings.

QSM and Model Estimates of Landed Catch through Period 2

	QSM	Model	% difference
Longspine	141	345	-59.1%
TWL Shortspine N CP	129	146	-11.4%
TWL Sablefish N CP	477	446	7.0%
Dover sole	2,706	2,926	-7.5%
Petrale Sole	1,341	1,372	-2.3%
English Sole	257	299	-14.1%
Arrowtooth Flounder	605	535	13.1%
Remaining Flatfish	296	500	-40.8%
Slope Rock	93	57	63.0%

If current limited entry trawl cumulative limits and Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundaries remain unchanged, it is predicted that the catch of thornyhead, sablefish, and slope rockfish will be less than the respective optimum yields (OYs) or harvest guidelines (HG) for the year. Therefore, the GMT discussed liberalizing limited entry trawl cumulative limits and decreasing the size of the trawl RCA so that fisheries for slope rockfish, sablefish, and thornyheads can be prosecuted more effectively. In order to encourage attainment of the slope rockfish, sablefish, and thornyhead limits, the GMT analyzed the following measures:

North of 40°10'

- Increase longspine thornyhead cumulative limits for selective flatfish trawl (SFFT) gear north of 40°10' for the remainder of the year
- Move the seaward trawl RCA boundary from 200 fm to 180 fm during period 4.

Between 38° and 40°10'

- Increase slope rockfish and splitnose limits from 8,000 pounds per two months to 20,000 pounds per two months between 38° and 40°10' for the remainder of the year

Coastwide

- Increase sablefish and shortspine thornyhead cumulative limits coastwide for the remainder of the year

The GMT believes there are risks associated with moving the seaward trawl RCA boundary from 200 fm to 180 fm. To address concerns over possible and unintended catch of darkblotched rockfish, the GMT recommends the Council give NMFS the authority to constrain the fishery outside the Council process if a trigger is met. The GMT recommends that the change in the trawl RCA boundary north of 40°10' to 180 fm and the increase in slope rockfish and splitnose cumulative limits between 38° and 40°10' be accompanied by an inseason trigger mechanism to constrain the fishery if higher than anticipated catches of slope rockfish or darkblotched rockfish occur in any period. The GMT recommends that the triggers be constructed in the following manner:

- Between 38° and 40°10': if landings of slope rockfish exceed 40 mt or landings of darkblotched exceed 9 mt during a cumulative limit period in that area, decrease slope rockfish and splitnose cumulative limits from 20,000 pounds to 8,000 pounds in the next period.
- North of 40°10': if more than 20 mt of slope rockfish other than darkblotched or more than 22 mt of darkblotched is landed in that period, restore the previously scheduled size of the trawl RCA by moving the western boundary from 180 fm to 200 fm in the next month or period.

Yellowtail in the Limited Entry Trawl Fishery

Landings data from early 2005 show that a small number of vessels have been approaching (or reaching) yellowtail rockfish cumulative limits using the selective flatfish trawl. These landings have often been associated with minor catches of canary rockfish, which is consistent with a known association of these two species. The GMT is concerned with the potential risk of higher than anticipated catch of canary rockfish if targeting of yellowtail were to occur, and believes this warrants consideration of a reduction in the yellowtail trip limits for selective flatfish trawl gear. The GMT also notes that the yellowtail bycatch rates associated with the exempted fishing permit (EFP) fishery during selective flatfish trawl gear development were considerably lower than the bycatch rates allowed by the current selective flatfish trawl cumulative limit of 2,000 pounds per two months. The GMT recommends that the Council consider lowering the yellowtail rockfish cumulative trip limits in the selective flatfish trawl from 2,000 pounds per two months to 1,000 pounds per two months.

The GMT notes that the proposed inseason trip limit changes reduce the incentive for vessels to specialize in fishing strategies prosecuted solely seaward of the RCA. Therefore, there will be new uncertainty introduced into the catch projection model based upon historical vessel participation resulting from these vessels fishing both deep-water and shallow-water strategies within a single cumulative period. The GMT will closely monitor progress toward OYs for both slope and shelf species as catch information from this mixed-depth strategy is accumulated in the catch projection model.

The GMT further notes that the decreased incentive for trawl vessels to fish under a pure slope strategy in the north may result in vessels using both large footrope and selective flatfish gear during the same trip or period, and these vessels are likely to have both gears on board at the same time. Allowing vessels to have both gear types on their net reels makes it difficult to enforce the use of selective flatfish trawl gear in the shoreward areas, and the potential exists for vessels to use large footrope gear in the shoreward areas. The GMT recognizes we may need future regulations that require only one gear to be on board during the trip or period, or that large footrope may need to be stored while transiting the RCA and areas shoreward of the RCA. However, the GMT understands that implementing such regulations would require a two-meeting process and notice and comment rule-making.

The GMT received concerns from one segment of the trawl industry that pursuing the current sablefish limit was resulting in increased levels of Dover sole discard. However, trawlers from other areas reported an almost opposite phenomenon, citing a need for increased sablefish limits to accommodate the catches they were encountering. This example is illustrative of the difficulty the GMT encounters in trying to react to anecdotal information on changing discard issues or other anomalous conditions reported by industry. For that matter, total catch impacts resulting from management changes can't be fully evaluated until a year after they've been implemented. More real time observer information would address both of these situations. Further, if the GMT had access to raw observer data, we would be more able to identify species associations in the actual catch and structure trip limits to better balance bycatch reduction with attainment of OYs.

LIMITED ENTRY FIXED GEAR SOUTH OF 34°27'

The GMT discussed a request to increase shelf rockfish limits to 5,000 pounds per two months. The GMT is concerned with potential cowcod catch between 40 fm and 60 fm and the little amount of observer data in that area. Therefore, the GMT recommends increasing shelf rockfish limits from 2,000 pounds per two months to 3,000 pounds per two months.

OPEN ACCESS SOUTH OF 34°27'

The GMT considered increasing shelf rockfish limits for the open access fishery in this area, and it was generally agreed that an increase in period limits from 500 pounds per two months to 750 pounds per two months (a similar percentage increase as for limited entry) was not likely to result in a conservation concern. However given the high value of the nearshore species, small changes in trip limits could result in unanticipated changes in effort. Consequently, the inability to predict the behavior of the open access fleet constrains our ability to fully evaluate the potential consequences of this action.

OPEN ACCESS NORTH OF 40°10'

Due to low catches of black rockfish, the GMT recommends an increase in minor nearshore rockfish from 5,000 pounds per two months, no more than 1,200 pounds of which may be species other than black or blue rockfish to 6,000 pounds per two months, no more than 1,200 pounds of which may be species other than black or blue rockfish.

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

California reported that higher than expected take of canary rockfish was observed when the recreational fishing season for groundfish and associated species opened in San Luis Obispo County in May 2005. Observations from other areas already open in California indicated that this take of canary was an unusual and localized event. California presented an estimate of canary take for all of California through May 2005 (0.54 mt) and indicated that this take was not expected to impact the groundfish seasons for other regions of California. California also provided a report detailing their education and catch reduction efforts in the San Luis Obispo area. Anecdotal evidence corroborated by the California Recreational Fisheries Survey sample data showed that landings significantly decreased in the San Luis Obispo area since these outreach efforts were implemented.

The GMT also reviewed the status of state recreational fisheries in Washington and Oregon. Based on data from the three states, the GMT does not recommend any recreational inseason management actions at this time.

FINAL CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

On Friday, the GMT will provide the Council with an updated bycatch score card and updated trip limit tables.

GMT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase cumulative limits in the limited entry trawl fishery for longspine, shortspine, sablefish, and slope rockfish as indicated in the attached tables.
2. Reduce limited entry trawl cumulative limits for yellowtail rockfish to 1,000 pounds for selective flatfish trawl gear for the remainder of the year.
3. Increase shelf rockfish limits for open access non-trawl gear south of 34°27' to 750 pounds per two months for the remainder of the year.
4. Increase shelf rockfish limits for limited entry fixed gear south of 34°27' to 3,000 pounds per two months for the remainder of the year.
5. Increase cumulative limited entry fixed gear and open access limits for minor nearshore rockfish and black rockfish from 5,000 pounds per two months, no more than 1,200 pounds of which may be species other than black or blue rockfish to 6,000 pounds per two months, no more than 1,200 pounds may be species other than black or blue rockfish between 40°10' and 34°27' for the remainder of the year.
6. Consider moving the seaward boundary of the trawl RCA north of 40°10' to 180 fm during period 4.
7. Give NMFS the authority to reduce slope rockfish limits and shift the trawl RCA boundary outside the Council process if triggers are met as described above.

LE Bottom Trawl Cumulative Limit and RCA Configurations

Option A: 180 fathom outline in period 4 in North

SUBAREA	Period	RCA Boundaries		Cumulative Limits							
		INLINE	OUTLINE	Sablefish	Longspine	Shortspine	Dover	Other Flat	Petrale	Arrowtooth	Slope Rock and Splitnose
N 40 10	1	75	150	9,500	15,000	3,500	69,000	110,000	No Limit	No Limit	4,000
	2	100	200	9,500	15,000	3,500	69,000	110,000	42,000	150,000	4,000
	3	100	200	17,000	23,000	4,900	30,000	110,000	40,000	150,000	4,000
	4	100	180	18,000	23,000	5,200	30,000	110,000	40,000	150,000	4,000
	5	100	200	18,000	23,000	5,200	30,000	110,000	40,000	150,000	4,000
	6	75	150	13,000	15,000	3,700	22,000	80,000	60,000	80,000	4,000
North SFF I Limit	1	75	150	1,500	1,000	1,000	20,000	100,000	25,000	70,000	4,000
	2	100	200	10,000	1,000	1,000	35,000	100,000	35,000	70,000	4,000
	3	100	200	10,000	1,000	3,000	30,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	4,000
	4	100	180	15,000	8,000	4,000	30,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	4,000
	5	100	200	15,000	8,000	4,000	30,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	4,000
	6	75	150	10,000	2,000	2,000	8,000	75,000	15,000	70,000	4,000
38 - 40 10	1	75	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	50,000	110,000	No Limit	No Limit	4,000
	2	100	200	14,000	19,000	4,200	50,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	4,000
	3	100	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	8,000
	4	100	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	20,000
	5	100	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	20,000
	6	75	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	35,000	110,000	100,000	20,000	20,000
S 38	1	75	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	50,000	110,000	No Limit	No Limit	40,000
	2	100	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	50,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	40,000
	3	100	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	40,000
	4	100	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	40,000
	5	100	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	40,000
	6	75	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	35,000	110,000	100,000	20,000	40,000

LE Bottom Trawl Cumulative Limit and RCA Configurations
Option B: 200 fathom outline in the North

SUBAREA	Period	RCA Boundaries		Cumulative Limits							
		INLINE	OUTLINE	Sablefish	Longspine	Shortspine	Dover	Other Flat	Petrals	Arrowtooth	Slope Rock and Splitnose
N 40 10	1	75	150	9,500	15,000	3,500	69,000	110,000	No Limit	No Limit	4,000
	2	100	200	9,500	15,000	3,500	69,000	110,000	42,000	150,000	4,000
	3	100	200	17,000	23,000	4,900	30,000	110,000	40,000	150,000	4,000
	4	100	200	18,000	23,000	5,200	30,000	110,000	40,000	150,000	4,000
	5	100	200	18,000	23,000	5,200	30,000	110,000	40,000	150,000	4,000
	6	75	150	13,000	15,000	3,700	22,000	80,000	60,000	80,000	4,000
North SFF I Limit	1	75	150	1,500	1,000	1,000	20,000	100,000	25,000	70,000	4,000
	2	100	200	10,000	1,000	1,000	35,000	100,000	35,000	70,000	4,000
	3	100	200	10,000	1,000	3,000	30,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	4,000
	4	100	200	15,000	8,000	4,000	30,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	4,000
	5	100	200	15,000	8,000	4,000	30,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	4,000
	6	75	150	10,000	2,000	2,000	8,000	75,000	15,000	70,000	4,000
38 - 40 10	1	75	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	50,000	110,000	No Limit	No Limit	4,000
	2	100	200	14,000	19,000	4,200	50,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	4,000
	3	100	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	8,000
	4	100	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	20,000
	5	100	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	20,000
	6	75	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	35,000	110,000	100,000	20,000	20,000
S 38	1	75	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	50,000	110,000	No Limit	No Limit	40,000
	2	100	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	50,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	40,000
	3	100	150	14,000	19,000	4,200	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	40,000
	4	100	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	40,000
	5	100	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	40,000	110,000	42,000	10,000	40,000
	6	75	150	16,000	19,000	4,600	35,000	110,000	100,000	20,000	40,000

Estimated Bottom Trawl Total Catch vs. April Scorecard and Harvest Guidelines

Option A: 180 fathom outline in period 4 in North

		Proj Catch	April Scorecard	HG
Rebuilding Species	Lingcod	152.0	152.0	
	Canary	5.8	8.0	
	POP	71.1	67.3	
	Darkblotche	157.4	157.5	
	Widow	1.3	1.3	
	Bocaccio	52.0	58.2	
	Yelloweye	0.3	0.3	
	Cowcod	0.9	1.1	
Target Species	Sablefish	2,652		3,505.0
	Longspine	1,086		2,450.0
	Shortspine	724		995.0
	Dover	6,979		7,445.0
	Arrowtooth	3,319		5,800.0
	Petrале	2,547		2,762.0
	O Flat	2,166		4,909.0
	SI Rock N	140		1,160.0
SI Rock S	394.0		639.0	

Option B: 200 fathom outline in the North

		Proj Catch	April Scorecard	HG
Rebuilding Species	Lingcod	151.7	152.0	
	Canary	5.7	8.0	
	POP	69.3	67.3	
	Darkblotche	157.3	157.5	
	Widow	1.3	1.3	
	Bocaccio	51.6	58.2	
	Yelloweye	0.3	0.3	
	Cowcod	0.9	1.1	
Target Species	Sablefish	2,644.3		3,505.0
	Longspine	1,085.8		2,450.0
	Shortspine	722.1		995.0
	Dover	6,969.7		7,445.0
	Arrowtooth	3,314.7		5,800.0
	Petrале	2,545.7		2,762.0
	O Flat	2,159.9		4,909.0
	SI Rock N	133.4		1,160.0
SI Rock S	394.5		639.0	