

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed several inseason management issues including the higher than anticipated catch of canary rockfish and petrale sole, the widow bycatch limit in the whiting fishery, and consistency between state and federal recreational regulations. The discussions and recommendations for Council consideration are outlined below.

COMMERCIAL LIMITED ENTRY TRAWL FISHERIES

Petrale sole and canary rockfish

A review of PacFIN Quota Species Monitoring (QSM) data shows that the catch of petrale sole is quickly approaching the optimum yield (OY)/acceptable biological catch (ABC). As of September 16, 2005, QSM data indicate that total non-tribal petrale sole catch is 2,552 mt out of a 2,762 OY/ABC. Based on this information, a winter petrale sole fishery cannot be accommodated. Additionally, the catch of canary rockfish in the limited entry bottom trawl fishery has exceeded the 8.0 mt bycatch scorecard's placeholder for the year. To address both of these issues, the GMT analyzed three options for inseason action, which are described in the table below.

Option	Date of Action	Trawl RCA Configuration *	Cumulative Limits
Option A (Achieves conservation objectives)	Oct 1 to the end of the year	250 fm to the shoreline coastwide	Adjust Cumulative Limits
Option B (Does not achieve conservation objectives)	Oct 1 to Nov 1	250 fm to 75 fm coastwide	Adjust Cumulative Limits
	Nov 1 to the end of the year	250 fm to the shoreline coastwide	Adjust Cumulative Limits
Option C – GMT preferred alternative (Achieves conservation objectives)	October 1 to the end of the year	250 fm to the shoreline north of 36° N latitude	Adjust Cumulative Limits
		250 fm to 50 fm south of 36° N latitude	

*Note: The proposed 250 fm RCA boundary is not modified to include petrale areas.

Based on the amount of canary rockfish remaining in the scorecard and the amount of petrale sole caught to date, the GMT does not believe that Option B can be accommodated. Although the GMT believes Options A and C both achieve conservation objectives, Option C allows for increased opportunities in areas south of 36° N latitude, where canary rockfish and petrale sole encounters are minimal, and therefore is the GMT's preferred option for Council consideration.

DTS limits

Cumulative trip limits are also recommended to keep Dover sole catch levels within the OY, and calculations of DTS catch levels within the OY, and calculation of DTS catch ratios results in trip limit adjustments in the following table under Option C. A small petrale sole limit which accommodates incidental catch in the DTS fishery is provided to minimize discard.

Option C - Adjustments to trawl RCA and Trawl Cumulative Limits

SUBAREA	PERIOD	RCA BOUNDARIES		BIMONTHLY LIMITS							
		INLINE	OUTLINE	SABLEFISH	LONGSPINE	SHORTSPINE	DOVER	O'FLAT	PETRALE	ARROWT'TH	SLOPERCK& SPLNOSE
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	35,000	110,000	40,000	150,000	4,000
	6	0	250	11,000	7,000	3,500	20,000	30,000	2,000	50,000	4,000
North Shoreward Limit	1	75	150	1,500	1,000	1,000	20,000	100,000	25,000	70,000	
	2	100	200	10,000	1,000	1,000	35,000	100,000	35,000	70,000	
	3	100	200	10,000	1,000	3,000	35,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	
	4	100	200	15,000	8,000	4,000	35,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	
	5	*100	*200	15,000	8,000	4,000	35,000	90,000	35,000	70,000	
	6	0	250	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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	8,000
	6	0	250	9,000	11,000	3,500	30,000	30,000	2,000	10,000	6,000
38-36	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	0	250	9,000	11,000	3,500	30,000	40,000	2,000	5,000	40,000
S 36	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	50	250	9,000	11,000	3,500	30,000	40,000	2,000	5,000	40,000

* note: RCA boundaries change to 0-250 on Oct 1 north of 36

RCA boundaries change to 50-250 on Oct 1 south of 36

bold text represents changes

Proposal C - Estimated Mortality after Inseason Adjustment

		North	South	Total
Rebuilding species	Lingcod	129.6	31.2	160.8
	Canary	8.0	1.5	9.5
	POP	64.7	0.0	64.7
	Darkbltch	107.8	28.1	136.0
	Widow	4.9	0.1	5.0
	Bocaccio	0.0	50.0	50.0
	Yelloweye	0.2	0.1	0.3
	Cowcod	0.0	0.9	0.9
Target species	Sablefish	1,837.4	591.9	2,429.3
	Longspine	257.5	438.9	696.4
	Shortspine	464.5	258.3	722.8
	Dover	5,883.2	1,547.8	7,431.0
	Arrowt'rh	4,494.5	28.1	4,522.5
	Petrals	2,415.0	332.0	2,748.0
	Othr Flat	848.9	572.2	1,421.1
	Slope Rock	227.2	242.4	469.6

California halibut:

The GMT examined fish ticket data from the 2004 CA halibut fishery in the Monterey International North Pacific Fishery Commission area to evaluate the co-occurrence of petrale sole with CA halibut. A total of 150 pounds of petrale were caught in association with the CA halibut fishery from October through December. Therefore, the GMT believes that the fishery can be prosecuted without contributing to a petrale resource concern.

Widow rockfish bycatch in the whiting fishery:

The GMT received a request to consider increasing the widow rockfish bycatch limit in the whiting fishery. As of the September 12, the non-tribal sector had taken 149.6 mt of the 200 mt widow bycatch limit. As some level of widow catch in the whiting fishery is unavoidable, there are concerns that the fishery will operate in a derby fashion to harvest as much whiting as possible before the widow bycatch limit is reached. This could result in not attaining the 2005 whiting OY. The amount of widow rockfish reserve in the bycatch scorecard is 26.8 mt. Therefore, there may be widow available if the Council chooses to increase the bycatch limit in the whiting fishery. The GMT recommends not allocating the entire reserve to the whiting fishery due to uncertainty in impact projections.

As of September 16, the total non-tribal catch of lingcod is 235 mt. The 2005 commercial harvest guideline for lingcod is 274.2 mt and the GMT anticipates that this commercial harvest guideline will be exceeded before the end of the year. The GMT does not expect that the lingcod OYs (1,801 mt and 612 mt) or the ABC (2,922 mt) will be exceeded. Therefore, the GMT recommends that the Council allow the lingcod harvest guideline to be exceeded so to not unnecessarily constrain the commercial fishery.

COMMERCIAL FIXED GEAR FISHERIES

Based on PacFIN QSM data through September 12, the sablefish daily trip limit (DTL) sector has attained less than half of their allocation for the year. As a result, the GMT analyzed an increase to DTL daily, weekly, and bimonthly limits, and discussed an increase in DTL fishery limits with the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP). As part of our analysis, the GMT

considered likely increases in effort and limit attainment from vessels engaged in the DTL fishery. Based on analysis of this sector and input from the GAP, the GMT is forwarding the option shown below for Council consideration. The GMT does not anticipate this option will result in increased levels of bycatch beyond what is already in the scorecard since those estimates were based on the assumption that each sector would achieve their allocation.

DTL Inseason Adjustment Proposal for October - December

<u>Time Period</u>		<u>Limit</u>
Daily	–	500 lbs
Weekly	–	1,500 lbs
Bimonthly	–	9,000 lbs

OTHER ISSUES

The GMT reviewed 2005 commercial and recreational harvest of minor nearshore rockfish for the area north of 40° 10' N latitude. Given the current level of landings it is possible that the northern minor nearshore rockfish OY may be exceeded, although this is unlikely to occur prior to the November Council meeting. If the OY is met or exceeded in 2005, the GMT does not consider this to be a resource issue for the following reasons:

1. The minor rockfish north OY is divided into three sub-OYs for nearshore, shelf, and slope rockfish. Harvest of both shelf and slope rockfish has been relatively low given current management constraints; and
2. The difference between the minor rockfish north ABC (3,680 mt) and OY (2,250 mt) is quite large.

The GMT will continue to monitor the harvest of the northern minor nearshore rockfish and will provide the Council with an update in November.

WASHINGTON RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

The Washington recreational fishery is managed under a joint harvest guideline with the Oregon recreational fishery for canary and yelloweye rockfish. As stated in the 2005-06 specifications Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) committed to take management action to close portions of its recreational fisheries seaward of a line approximating 30 fm as an inseason measure, if the harvest guideline for canary and/or yelloweye were projected to be exceeded.

At the end of July, after receiving the recreational catch data through June, WDFW's revised catch projections for the year indicated that 1.8 mt of canary rockfish would be harvested (as compared to a state harvest target of 1.7 mt, and a shared harvest guideline of 8.5 mt). At that time, the revised catch projection for yelloweye rockfish was still on target. In response, effective August 5, 2005, WDFW adopted an emergency regulation to close its recreational bottomfish and halibut fisheries seaward of a line approximating 30 fm from the U.S./Canada border to Leadbetter Pt., Washington (Washington Marine Catch Areas 2, 3, and 4). The action

did not apply to the area between Leadbetter Pt. and the Columbia River as the canary and yelloweye catches in this area are extremely low.

At the end of August, after receiving the recreational catch data through July, WDFW's revised catch projections for the year indicated that 1.8 mt of canary rockfish was still expected to be harvested. However, the revised catch projection for yelloweye rockfish is 4.2 mt (out of a 3.5 mt state harvest target, and a shared harvest guideline of 6.7 mt). It is expected that, with the fishery closed seaward of 30 fm, the additional yelloweye rockfish harvest will be near-zero through the end of the year.

Washington recreational fisheries for bottomfish typically decline in September and halibut fisheries close at the end of September. Therefore, restricting the Washington recreational fishery after September will have little to no effect. The GMT recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service adopt federal regulations which conform to the state regulations for Washington recreational bottomfish fisheries.

OREGON RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

Due to poor recreational ocean salmon catches off Oregon in 2005, there was a notable effort shift from targeted salmon trips to targeted groundfish trips. Combined with increased catch rates of groundfish species, most notably black rockfish, blue rockfish, and yelloweye rockfish, early attainment of harvest guidelines were eminent if action was not taken. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) took action to reduce the marine fish daily bag limit from eight to five, effective July 16, 2005 in an effort to ensure the recreational groundfish fishery could continue through the end of the year.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife also prohibited retention of cabezon in the ocean boat fishery beginning August 11, 2005. Landing data indicated that the state imposed ocean boat harvest cap of 15.8 mt had been met. Due to action taken by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2004, the state is unable to close shore-based groundfish fisheries, though the state may still impose bag limit and length restrictions. Therefore, the cabezon prohibition applies to the ocean boat fishery only.

To reduce impacts on yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish, the ODFW closed waters seaward of 40 fm to groundfish retention from June 1 – September 30. Vessels fishing the high relief areas of Stonewall Banks, a popular Pacific halibut fishing area west of Newport, Oregon with historically high catches of yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish, were only permitted to troll on all-depth Pacific halibut days if they had Pacific halibut on the vessel. Additionally, anglers were restricted from retaining Pacific halibut caught in this closed area. A conference call with WDFW was held in July to discuss both canary rockfish and yelloweye rockfish catches. There appeared, at that time, to be a sufficient Washington/Oregon recreation value in the bycatch scorecard for yelloweye rockfish. The occurrence of yelloweye rockfish in the nearshore groundfish fishery increased substantially in July 2005 compared with previous months and this increase was not captured in earlier projections. This increase was not identified until the end of August, due to the time-lag required for estimating recreational catch. The 2005-2006 specifications EIS specified that ODFW may take action to implement a 30 fm or 20 fm management line if the yelloweye or canary rockfish harvest guidelines were projected to be exceeded. However, further analysis by ODFW reflected that there would be little additional

savings in yelloweye impacts by implementing a 30 fm line, because very little fishing occurs between 30 fm and 40 fm off the Oregon coast. In addition, the time needed to develop and implement a 20 fm management line would not allow for savings in the projected catch. Angler effort, and therefore groundfish harvest, typically declines in early September. With the current 40 fm line in place, an updated yelloweye rockfish catch estimate of 8.5 mt for Oregon and Washington combined is projected.

CALIFORNIA RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

California provided the GMT with their current projections of total recreational take for 2005 based upon California Recreational Fisheries Survey estimates for the period January – July 2005 and catch model projections for August - December. These results indicate that the take of groundfish species of concern in California is not expected to exceed harvest targets. However, catches of black rockfish and minor nearshore rockfish, both north and south of 40° 10'N Lat., are tracking higher than expected. Over the next month, California plans to thoroughly review the July CRFS estimates, the trends in catch of deeper nearshore rockfish, and, if available, the preliminary August CRFS estimates to determine what inseason actions, if any, will need to be considered at the November Council meeting.

The GMT will provide an updated bycatch scorecard and trip limit tables on Wednesday under agenda item F.5.

GMT RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. For October – December, expand the trawl RCA to extend between 250 fm (not modified to include petrale areas) and the shoreline north of 36° N latitude and expand the trawl RCA to extend between 250 fm (not modified to include petrale sole areas) and 50 fm south of 36° N latitude.
2. Adjust limited entry trawl trip limits as outlined in the Option C table.
3. Consider an increase to the widow bycatch limit in the whiting fishery.
4. Allow the lingcod harvest guideline to be exceeded so as to not unnecessarily constrain the commercial fishery.
5. Increase limited entry fixed gear and open access sablefish daily trip limits to 500 lb/day, 1,500 lb/week, 9,000 lb/2 months for October – December.
6. Adopt conforming Federal regulations for recreational regulation changes in Washington and Oregon.

PFMC
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