

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON MANAGEMENT SPECIFICATIONS FOR SPINY DOGFISH AND PACIFIC COD FOR 2006

At the June Council meeting, based on recommendations from the Groundfish Management Team (GMT), the Council decided to include on its September agenda, consideration of setting an acceptable biological catch (ABC) and optimum yield (OY) for spiny dogfish, and management measures (i.e., trip limits) for both Pacific cod (which already has an OY) and dogfish. After further discussion, the GMT recommends that the setting of an ABC and OY for spiny dogfish be considered through the 2009-10 specifications process, following the completion and approval of a stock assessment in 2007, and that the Council only consider management measures for these two species for 2006 (and 2007-2008). The GMT notes that other species, such as California scorpionfish, have had trip limits in place prior to a formal assessment and the setting of an ABC and OY. Therefore, the GMT developed alternatives for management measures for Pacific cod and spiny dogfish for the Council's consideration, which would be effective in 2006. The GMT would like to stress that, once adopted, changes to the trip limit amounts may be considered for 2007-2008, as well as through inseason adjustments.

Process and Timeline

It is our understanding that given the timing of the federal rule-making process, it is unlikely that measures would be in place for the January 1, 2006, start date of the fishing year. Therefore, the alternatives developed by the GMT all have an implementation date of March 1, 2006, which is the beginning of the second two-month cumulative period. The National Marine Fisheries Service and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are preparing a draft Environmental Assessment (EA), which is tiered from the 2005-2006 specifications Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EA will include environmental and economic analyses of the alternatives selected by the Council for consideration.

Intersector Allocations

Because there is not a separate ABC and OY for spiny dogfish, and given that this species is targeted by all commercial sectors—limited entry and open access, and both trawl and fixed gear—the GMT is not proposing differential trip limits by sector. Rather, the trip limits across Alternatives 2 and 3 are the same for all commercial sectors in all periods.

While there is an OY for Pacific cod, the recent and historical landings are almost all trawl. A review of the 2000-2004 data indicates that a minimal trip limit (~ 1,000 lbs/2 months) would accommodate all of the limited entry and open access fixed gear landings; therefore, the trip limits for these sectors remain static across Alternatives 2 and 3. The GMT would like to note that these trip limits were developed to accommodate existing fisheries and are not intended to represent any long-term allocation among sectors.

Range of Alternatives

In general, the GMT's approach in developing the range of alternatives was to review the amount of fish needed to accommodate current harvest levels on a two-month cumulative basis. We did not structure alternatives to provide for higher harvest levels for future developing fisheries, as these proposals are for the 2006 fishing year only. If, in the future, there are markets and/or

gears developed to allow new, targeted fisheries, then the Council could consider liberalizing trip limits for different sectors, as appropriate.

In order to analyze a full range of alternatives, the GMT is using Alternative 1 (status quo), which is unlimited amounts of Pacific cod and dogfish, to represent the high end of the range.

The GMT did trip frequency analyses for both Pacific cod and dogfish using fish ticket data from the 2000-2004 fisheries. Alternative 2 in each case represents trip limits which would accommodate practically all of the commercial fishing activity that occurred during this timeframe. It is anticipated that, if participation in the directed Pacific cod fishery remains at the current level, these trip limits would result in approaching, but not exceeding, the Pacific cod OY. Given that spiny dogfish would remain under the “Other Fish” category and would not have a separate OY, it is anticipated that the trip limits under Alternative 2 would not result in exceeding the “Other Fish” OY. The GMT notes that the data reviewed include periods when the West Coast groundfish fisheries were not subject to rockfish conservation areas (RCAs); therefore, the resulting harvest levels in 2006 (with RCAs in place) may be lower due to the inaccessibility of these species by one or more gear groups.

Alternative 3, in each case, represents the more conservative end of the range and could be constraining on one or more fisheries. These alternatives would be the most likely to ensure that the Pacific cod and “Other Fish” OYs would not be exceeded inseason; however, these alternatives would not maximize utilization of these species. The GMT’s recommended alternatives are:

Spiny Dogfish

Table 1. Limited Entry Trawl; Limited Entry Fixed Gear; Open Access

	Alt 1 (status quo)	Alt 2	Alt 3
Period 1	Status quo – unlimited (rule effective March 1, 2006)		
Period 2	Unlimited	150,000 lbs/2 mo	150,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 3	Unlimited	150,000 lbs/2 mo	150,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 4	Unlimited	100,000 lbs/2 mo	80,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 5	Unlimited	100,000 lbs/2 mo	80,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 6	Unlimited	100,000 lbs/2 mo	80,000 lbs/2 mo

Pacific Cod

Table 2. Limited Entry Trawl

	Alt 1 (status quo)	Alt 2	Alt 3
Period 1	Status quo – unlimited (rule effective March 1, 2006)		
Period 2	Unlimited	30,000 lbs/2 mo	30,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 3	Unlimited	70,000 lbs/2 mo	70,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 4	Unlimited	70,000 lbs/2 mo	70,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 5	Unlimited	70,000 lbs/2 mo	45,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 6	Unlimited	30,000 lbs/2 mo	30,000 lbs/2 mo

Table 3. Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access

	Alt 1 (status quo)	Alt 2	Alt 3
Period 1	Status quo – unlimited (rule effective March 1, 2006)		
Period 2	Unlimited	1,000 lbs/2 mo	1,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 3	Unlimited	1,000 lbs/2 mo	1,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 4	Unlimited	1,000 lbs/2 mo	1,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 5	Unlimited	1,000 lbs/2 mo	1,000 lbs/2 mo
Period 6	Unlimited	1,000 lbs/2 mo	1,000 lbs/2 mo

Analysis of Alternatives

As noted in the Situation Summary, setting management measures for spiny dogfish and Pacific cod proactively addresses unanticipated participants in the open access fisheries, and the estimated amounts of targeted species harvest and potential bycatch of overfished rockfish. This concern is currently addressed through bycatch caps on canary and yelloweye rockfish that were established for the open access sector through emergency rule. If the Council ultimately decides to implement trip limits for spiny dogfish and Pacific cod for 2006, then the GMT would recommend that the bycatch caps for canary and yelloweye for the open access sector not be extended into 2006.

GMT Recommendations

1. Approve the management measure alternatives listed for spiny dogfish and Pacific cod for public review, with final adoption scheduled for the November Council meeting.
2. Defer the consideration of setting specifications (ABC and OY) for spiny dogfish until the 2009-2010 management cycle, following approval of a formal assessment in 2007.

PFMC
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