

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL COMMENTS ON YELLOWEYE STOCK ASSESSMENT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard a presentation on the yelloweye assessment from Farron Wallace of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The assessment was data poor. The GAP recognizes the difficulty associated with doing a stock assessment when there is very little data to use.

If the optimum yield (OY) is reduced to 12.6 mt the GAP believes there will be dramatic effects on many fisheries.

Limited Entry Trawl: Although the trawl fisheries have very little incidental catch of yelloweye, with this level of reduction the GAP is concerned that the trawl fishery will take further cuts. For example, in Washington they expect reductions of as much as 50% in:

- the summer flatfish,
- arrowtooth and
- beach fisheries.

Tribal: The GAP was uncertain as to what reductions may or may not occur in the Tribal fishery.

Limited Entry Fixed Gear: In Washington, Oregon, and California the limited entry blackcod (sablefish) fishery may experience significant cost increases associated with lower catch rates and higher fuel expenditures if the fishery must be constrained to deeper waters to avoid yelloweye impacts. Such a constraint would also reduce the incidental catch of halibut and associated revenues.

Limited Entry and Open Access: In Washington, the dogfish fishery would have to be curtailed.

Nongroundfish: In Oregon, the directed halibut longline fisheries would likely be closed, for an estimated direct loss to fishermen of at least \$6 million dollars in exvessel revenue. This does not include associated economic losses for processors and communities.

Open Access Fishery: The open access fishery is now fishing inside of 30 fathoms and in deeper waters, primarily for blackcod. To achieve the needed reductions the fishery will probably be constrained to within 20 fathoms. Constraint of this and other fisheries to these shallow waters is likely to result in increasing restrictions to protect nearshore stocks. The constraints and effects on the open access blackcod fishery would be similar to those discussed for the limited entry blackcod fishery.

Recreational Fisheries: In the scorecard, the recreational fisheries have greater total impact on yelloweye than the other sectors. Both the Washington and Oregon recreational fisheries would

likely be pushed inside 20 fathoms. Washington and Oregon estimate that they could lose their entire halibut fishery (estimated to be at least 16,000 fish). With a catch per unit of effort of nearly 1 fish per angler and an estimated impact of \$200 per angler day, the resulting direct losses for this fishery alone could be \$3.2 million. Oregon representatives expect to see groundfish trips decline by one-third to one-half. Oregon recreational representatives indicated that their fisheries would likely be reduced to a 2 month season and questioned the ability of businesses to remain viable with a fishery of such short duration.

Overall, the GAP is concerned about the ability of many fishing and fishing dependent businesses to survive given these draconian reductions when combined with similar reductions in other fisheries on which these same businesses rely, for example the salmon fishery.

All sectors are concerned about the potential gear conflicts that may occur as the industry is constrained to fishing in smaller and smaller geographic areas.

The GAP is concerned that with an extremely low OY there will not be fish available to perform research to improve understanding of the biology and status of the stock. For example, the halibut survey may be constrained. Additionally, the loss of fishery dependent information will impact stock assessments and impact the Council's ability to develop management tools better tailored to achieve the needed reductions with lesser adverse economic impact. For example, without a fishery it would be difficult to identify hot spots, the closure of which might achieve the needed reductions with lesser impacts on the broader fishing grounds.

The GAP heard a presentation of management options from the Groundfish Management Team (GMT). The option was to use a phase-in approach to reducing the OY for yelloweye from 27 MT status quo to 25 MT in 2007, 23 MT in 2008, 21 Mt in 2009, and 19 Mt in 2010. The GAP also understands that using such a phase in approach only lengthens the mean time to rebuild by approximately by 7 months.

Given

- the paucity of data being used in the current yelloweye assessment,
- the high degree of uncertainty that results from using this data,
- the draconian effects of the reductions on fishers, processors, and the dependent businesses and local governments,
- and the opportunities a phase-in approach would provide to
 - better understand the stock status and
 - develop management tools to achieve reductions with lesser adverse economic effects on the industry and dependent communities
- while having minimal impacts on the mean rebuilding time,

The GAP agrees with the GMT phase-in approach and urges the Council to accept the GMT recommendation.

PFMC
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