

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM (GMT)
REPORT ON CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the recreational fishery measures taken by the states of Washington and Oregon. To maintain consistency between state and Federal recreational regulations the GMT considered the issues outlined below.

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

WASHINGTON

In 2005, the canary rockfish harvest in the Washington recreational fishery did not exceed the state's harvest target of 1.7 mt; however, the yelloweye rockfish harvest in the Washington recreational fishery was 5.2 mt. Therefore, to reduce the catch of yelloweye rockfish to stay within the Washington recreational harvest target, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife proposes to:

- Prohibit retention of rockfish and lingcod seaward of a line approximating the 20 fm depth contour from May 22, 2006, through September 30, 2006, in Marine Areas 3 and 4 (the areas between Neah Bay and La Push) on days that halibut fishing is closed.
- Prohibit retention of rockfish and lingcod seaward of a line approximating the 30 fm depth contour from March 18, 2006, through June 15, 2006, in Marine Area 2 (Westport)

This measure is consistent with the inseason action taken in August 2005 when a 20-fm closure off Washington's northern coast was implemented to reduce the canary and yelloweye recreational fishery catch. The 2005 action was taken only in the north coast area because canary and yelloweye catches are highest in that area.

Because the 20-fm line has not been previously analyzed, the following modification will be made: where the line approximating the 20 fm depth contour extends beyond state waters and into the EEZ, the line will follow the seaward boundary of the state coastal waters.

- Halibut fishery regulations for the 2006 fishery became effective March 5, 2006. It is necessary to modify the recreational groundfish regulations to conform to the new halibut regulations.
 - South of Leadbetter Point, WA to the Washington/Oregon border, when Pacific halibut are onboard the vessel, groundfish may not be taken and retained, possessed or landed, except sablefish and Pacific cod.

OREGON

- In December, 2005, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) refined management measures for the 2006 Oregon recreational groundfish fishery, based on the angler effort patterns observed in 2005. Because there was a significant increase in angler effort targeting groundfish in 2005, due primarily to the poor salmon season in the waters off Oregon, the OFWC adopted a marine fish bag limit of 6 fish in aggregate. The reduced bag limit was necessary to keep the fishery within the 2006 Oregon harvest guideline for black rockfish and to provide a 12 month fishing season. All other management measures (i.e. length restrictions for lingcod, cabezon, and kelp greenling, >40 fm closure during June-September) remain at status quo. To conform with the Oregon State regulations it's necessary to revise the bag limits in federal regulation from 10 marine fish per day to 6 marine fish per day.
- Halibut regulations for the 2006 fishery become effective March 5, 2006. It is necessary to modify the recreational groundfish regulations to conform to the new halibut regulations.
 - South of the Washington/Oregon border to Cape Falcon, OR, when Pacific halibut are onboard the vessel, groundfish may not be taken and retained, possessed or landed, except sablefish and Pacific cod.
 - South of the Cape Falcon, OR, to Humbug Mountain, OR, when Pacific halibut are onboard the vessel, groundfish may not be taken and retained, possessed or landed, except sablefish, during days open to the Oregon Central Coast "all-depth" sport halibut fishery.
- The GMT reviewed the supplemental report provided by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Agenda Item F.5.c: Supplemental ODFW Report 2) detailing the development of discard mortality calculations that will be used for 2006 recreational catch estimates. The GMT endorses the use of these discard mortality rates for the 2006 fishery in Oregon.

CALIFORNIA

- The GMT received a supplemental report provided by the California Department of Fish and Game detailing the 2005 recreational catch estimates from the California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS). The GMT also reviewed the 2005 catch estimates in relation to the 2005 harvest targets, which reflected that catches were well below the recreational harvest guidelines for canary rockfish and yelloweye rockfish. As the current management structure is expected to keep catches within 2006 harvest guidelines, and there is uncertainty regarding the 2006 recreational salmon fishery that could increase effort directed at groundfish, California has no inseason actions for 2006 for the Council's consideration.

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

LIMITED ENTRY AND OPEN ACCESS DAILY TRIP LIMIT FISHERY (DTL)

- The GMT received a request to consider an increase in the sablefish daily limit from 300 lb/day to 400 lb/day for the limited entry fixed gear and open access DTL fisheries coastwide. Given the increased participation in the open access portion of the fishery in recent years and the potential effort shifts as a result of salmon fishery restrictions, the GMT does not believe that an increase should be made at this time. If fishery participation increases substantially over previous years, liberalizing the daily limit early in the season could result in reductions below 300 lb/day later in the year or closures. Reducing the limit below 300 lb/day later in the year could result in increased discards of sablefish and co-occurring species. Therefore, the GMT would prefer to assess the fishery as the season progresses and information becomes available on DTL fishery participation and catch levels.

BYCATCH LIMITS IN THE PACIFIC WHITING FISHERY

The GMT discussed bycatch limits for canary and widow rockfish in the non-tribal whiting fishery and believes that limits that are equal to those set for the commercial portion of the whiting fishery in 2005 are appropriate given the Council-adopted Pacific whiting OY, estimated bycatch in other fisheries, and industry requests for limits that are the same as those adopted for the commercial fishery last year. Specifically, the GMT recommends that the 2006 bycatch limits for the non-tribal Pacific whiting fishery be set at 4.7 mt for canary rockfish and 200 mt for widow rockfish and, if necessary, these limits can be revisited and adjusted inseason.

BYCATCH SCORECARD UPDATE

An updated bycatch scorecard is attached to this report. These changes include updates to limited entry groundfish trawl impacts, whiting fishery impacts for the adopted whiting OY, 2006 EFPs, and specified 2006 OYs. Recreational impact estimates were not changed due to anticipated effort shifts from potential reductions in salmon fishing opportunities. With regard to the bycatch estimates in the non-tribal whiting fishery, all numbers reflect projected impacts except for widow and canary rockfish, which reflect the GMT-recommended bycatch caps under this agenda item. These bycatch caps and updates leave a reserve of 2.7 mt for canary rockfish and 31.7 mt for widow rockfish relative to the 2006 OYs. Projected darkblotched rockfish impacts in the whiting fishery reflect the GMT's best estimate of total mortality in each sector and do not represent a GMT recommendation for a darkblotched bycatch cap. The GMT will more thoroughly review levels of darkblotched rockfish that are available for Council consideration of a whiting fishery bycatch cap at the April Council meeting.

PFMC
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