

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON THE PROPOSED STONEWALL BANKS YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH CONSERVATION AREA

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) recommends consideration of a third option (Figure 1) for the implementation of a recreational Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA) located at Stonewall Banks, off the coast of Newport, Oregon. This third option is within the range of options for development of a recreational Stonewall Banks YRCA, previously adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) at its April 2006 meeting.

ODFW met with recreational fishery participants in Newport, Oregon on May 17, 2006 to discuss the range of management measures for the 2007-2008 recreational groundfish fisheries that were adopted by the PFMC at its April 2006 meeting. One of the topics at that meeting was the development of the recreational Stonewall Banks YRCA. Anglers fishing in this area would be prohibited from retaining groundfish, regardless of target species. This area may also be implemented in the Pacific halibut fishery beginning in 2007 as an area closed to the retention of Pacific halibut, replacing the closure that currently exists in that fishery. Adjustments to the 2007 Pacific halibut Catch Sharing Plan would be made as appropriate. Consideration may be given to allow vessels that have retained Pacific halibut (from outside the closed area) to troll (mooching prohibited) for salmon within the closed area.

The fishery participants that were present at the Newport meeting crafted the area proposed as Option 3, based on long-term knowledge of the area. Additionally, in 2005, ODFW conducted a research project, scoping the viability of employing external acoustic tags on yelloweye rockfish to determine site fidelity characteristics, and discard mortality. Tags were placed on 6 yelloweye rockfish; all were intercepted outside of the south-east border of the Option 1 closure area; area that is included in Option 3 boundaries.

A management alternative that was introduced at the Newport meeting was to require vessels within the closure area to troll only, regardless of target species, or retained catch. This means that any vessel fishing within this area would be required to have the vessel in gear at all times while in the closure area. Anglers would be able to retain any species of fish (i.e. groundfish, Pacific halibut, salmon, etc.) caught while in the area. This alternative requires further consideration.

The northern boundary of Option 3 is currently under review, and is awaiting further discussion with fishery participants. ODFW staff is currently working with fishery participants to determine an appropriate northern boundary, as data collected in the International Pacific Halibut Commission stock assessment survey indicates presence of

yelloweye rockfish further north than the current northern boundary within Option 3. Adjusted coordinates will be provided to the PFMC at its June 2006 meeting.

Figure 1. Each of the three options for the implementation of a recreational Stonewall Banks YRCA. Option 1 is the smallest box and represents the current closure in the Pacific halibut fishery. Option 2 is the largest box, and Option 3 is the box in between.

