

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT SUMMARIZING
PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED REGARDING 2007-2008 GROUND FISH
MANAGEMENT

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife held a series of public meetings to gather public input on the range of management measures adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council for each of the 2007-2008 groundfish fisheries (commercial and recreational). Meetings were conducted coastwide on 4 consecutive days; beginning in Brookings, Oregon, and moving north to Coos Bay, Newport, and Astoria, and consisted of a joint session to discuss regulation setting processes and harvest levels, and break-out sessions to separately discuss the harvest levels and management measures specific to the recreational or commercial fisheries.

Recreational

Table 1 details the majority opinions from each meeting as well as a listing of individual comments regarding proposed recreational management measures for the 2007-2008 groundfish fisheries. Overall, attendees were very concerned about the proposed low level of yelloweye rockfish, and were adamant that the groundfish fishery would not be sustainable under the management structure of Action Alternatives 1a and 1b (Figure 1). If forced to determine a preference between Action Alternatives 1a and 1b, most felt that a reduction in the Pacific halibut fishery would have a less severe impact than a 2-month groundfish fishery.

Both the north and south coasts (Astoria and Brookings) preferred having a reduction in season duration over a reduction in the daily marine bag limit. The central coast (Coos Bay and Newport) preferred maintaining a year round fishery, though meeting attendees cautioned that reducing the marine fish daily bag limit further would greatly curtail fishing interest. Nearly all participants confirmed the desire to maintain a marine fish daily bag limit of no fewer than 5 fish.

Overall, attendees were supportive of creating a flatfish daily bag limit of 25 fish in aggregate, consisting of all soles and flounders except Pacific halibut. Currently, all flatfish except Pacific sanddab and Pacific halibut are managed within the marine fish daily bag limit.

Reactions to increased lingcod opportunity were mixed. There was no support for a minimum size limit of 20-inches, some support for a minimum size limit of 22-inches, and most support for the status quo minimum size limit of 24-inches. Most attendees did not endorse an increase in the lingcod daily bag limit, unless there were dramatic changes in either the season structure or depth restrictions.

Commercial

Bottom Trawl

Overall bottom trawl fishermen understood and accepted the rationale behind the suite of high, medium and low OY alternatives. At the low end (particularly for nearshore selective flatfish trawl) the level of trip limits presented might not even cover operational cost (high price of fuel). Deepwater fishermen were also concerned about high fuel costs, and indicated they might then elect to fish closer to home – which would increase nearshore trawl effort. An option to allow only one trawl net type per 2-month cumulative catch period is intended to prevent increased effort nearshore (which could result in early season closure). Fishermen were split regarding support for such an option. Bottom trawl fishermen also indicated that the trip limit ratios are not aligned with actual ratios of one species to another in actual catches, and will result in unnecessary discard. Dover sole trip limits should be increased relative to sablefish and petrale sole. Finally, some fishermen indicated that using state-wide or even region-wide estimates for bycatch mortality penalized fishermen that do not catch canary rockfish or yelloweye rockfish in their area. They felt that a move towards sub-regional, or even sub-state management would be a fair approach.

Midwater-trawl

No Pacific whiting fishery participants attended, and no comments were received.

Fixed-gear sablefish

Fixed-gear fishermen were universal in their belief that the sablefish OY was set too low. If Action Alternative 2 (fish outside 125 fm) or Action Alternative 1 (fish outside 150 fm) is implemented it should only apply to longline gear (pot bycatch is nearly non-existent compared to longline). Longline fishermen were not well represented. Fisherman understood that the FMP would need to be amended to make this change (separate pot and longline management options), but felt it would be worthwhile.

Nearshore Hook & Line

The majority felt that season structure and shallower depth restrictions would be preferable to reduced target species harvest levels. Fishing inside 20 fm was accepted by nearly all (a minority felt that 10 or 15 fm would be acceptable). Fishing in less than 20 fm during the winter was inadvisable because fish disperse and safety issues are a great concern.

Figure 1. Season structure along with expected yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish impacts for various 2007-08 Oregon recreational fishery action alternatives, compared to the no action alternative.

Alternative	Month												Marine Bag	Ling Bag	Ling Size	Yelloweye Impact (mt)	Canary Impact (mt)
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	LDay	S	O	N					
1a	CLOSED												10*	3	20	1.6	1.6
1b	GF open <20 fm & Halibut fishery reduced by 30%												6*	3	20	1.5	2.3
2	GF open <20 fm												5*	2	22	1.9	2.6
3a	GF open <40 fm												5**	2	22	2.5	3.7
3b	GF open <40 fm												5**	2	22	2.9	4.0
No Action	GF open all depth												6*	2	24	3.6	5.3

* Status quo marine bag species.

**Marine bag limit excludes flatfish which have a separate 25 fish daily bag limit.

Table 1. Major Sport Issues Discussed at Public Meetings reviewing 2007-08 Management Measures *

	Brookings	Coos Bay	Newport	Astoria
Number of Public Participants	8	6	10	6
Issues:				
Year round season	Suggest April 1 - October 15 fishery.	Year round fishery. Opposed to fishery inside of 40 fm all year (Action Alternatives 3a and 2 are not feasible).	Year round fishery at expense of offshore opportunity. No depth closure inside of 25 fm (Action Alternative 2 is not feasible).	Suggest March 15 - October 15 or April 1 -October 15. No depth closure inside of 25 fm (Action Alternative 2 is not feasible).
Marine bag limit		No less than 5 (or 6) marine bag.	No less than 5 marine bag.	Higher marine bag with less than year round season.
Separate flatfish bag limit	Yes (unanimous)	Yes. (concern for starry flounder and California halibut)	Yes. Less confusing for anglers as not need to identify species (except P. halibut) and less citations.	Yes, but maybe reduce bag limit from 25. Remain open year round.
Lingcod bag limit	2 (status quo)	If fishery open > 40 fm =2. If fishery open < 40 fm =2 or 3.	If fishery open > 40 fm =2. If fishery open < 40 fm =2 or 3. Concern for increased yelloweye rockfish impacts.	If year round season =2. If reduced season and/or reduced marine bag limit =3.
Lingcod minimum length (inches)	22 or 24 (most preferred status quo)	24	24	22
Reduce Pacific halibut season to achieve longer groundfish season of at least six months	Not an issue in this area (little P. halibut opportunity)	Neither reduced Pacific halibut opportunity (Action Alternative 1b) or 2 month groundfish season (Action Alternative 1a) are feasible. Action Alternative 1b would have less impact to the fishery.	Neither reduced Pacific halibut opportunity (Action Alternative 1b) or 2 month groundfish season (Action Alternative 1a) are feasible. Action Alternative 1b would have less impact to the fishery.	Neither reduced Pacific halibut opportunity (Action Alternative 1b) or 2 month groundfish season (Action Alternative 1a) are feasible.

Other Related Proposals/ Issues	1. Weekly or annual limits on rockfish (tags?) 2. Regional mgt within OR on nearshore species (north vs south coast)	1. Allow incidental take of lingcod in P. halibut fishery (especially if Stonewall Bank is closed). 2. Regional mgt within OR. 3. Manage yelloweye rf on state status (regional).	Viable economic impact statement needed to address various options and effect on fishing industry, coastal economy, and state.	Columbia R. subarea would like an increase in the OR/CA sport P. halibut allocation as they have little incidental yelloweye rf impacts.
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* Comments reflect majority opinion. All were informed the shore fishery would be managed for a year round season as yelloweye rf and canary rf are not impacted in the shore fishery.

Individual or minority observations on Major Sport Issues by Port

Year round season (Confirm: year round fishery at expense of offshore opportunity and reduced marine bag)

- Newport
 - Values fish more in winter
 - March - October 15 season
 - Move the fishery inside 15-fathoms all year and avoid yelloweye rockfish
 - No less than 5 fish marine bag limit
 - No less than 8 fish marine bag limit
- Coos Bay
 - No less than 6 fish marine bag limit
 - No less than 5 fish marine bag limit
- Brookings
 - A few participants favored year round season
 - March should be left open as lingcod fishing is good
 - Inseason closures and bag limit changes discourages anglers from coming to the coast
 - There is a good biological reason for closing in winter as lingcod are guarding nests

Lingcod bag limit

- Astoria
 - Leave it alone for a few years
 - Ask for 3 fish bag to negotiate from
- Newport
 - Concerned that increasing the lingcod bag limit may result in increased yelloweye rockfish catch
 - Increase lingcod catch so as to reduce abundance and overall predation on rockfish
 - Concern over the effect of raising the bag limit on the abundance status of lingcod in 10 years
 - Close the winter fishery except allow 3 lingcod and implement gear size restrictions
- Coos Bay

- Let's get something back (3 fish)
- Leave it at 2 fish
- Adopt tag with either 12 or 24 fish per year
- Will allowing 3 lingcod increase the rockfish impact?
- Brookings
 - One angler preferred 3 fish bag

Lingcod minimum length (inches)

- Astoria
 - Leave it alone for a few years
 - Ask for 20-inches to negotiate from
- Newport
 - Why would we want to reduce the minimum size limit? No less than 24 inches!
- Brookings
 - How about reinstating the upper length limit on lingcod?
 - One angler recommended a 22-inch minimum length
 - Enforcement representative (Oregon State Police) felt that a change in lingcod minimum length would cause confusion

Separate flatfish bag limit

- Newport
 - Increased opportunity
 - One participant opposed

Reduce Pacific halibut season to achieve longer groundfish season of at least 6 months

- Astoria
 - July through Labor Day fishery inside of 20-fathoms is not feasible
 - Newport needs to find a way of reducing yelloweye rf impacts or else reduce catch in Newport and allow increased halibut catch in other area
- Newport
 - We can afford to lose 30% of the P. halibut quota
 - July through Labor Day fishery inside of 20-fathoms is not feasible
 - Increase Stonewall RCA, allow troll gear only and restrict weight to avoid catching yelloweye rockfish
 - Several participants suggest allowing fishing for salmon in RCA with halibut on vessel
 - Impacts are in Stonewall Banks area and need to be reduced by RCA or gear restrictions. Suggest enlarged RCA and consider troll gear (barbless hooks, weight limits?)
- Coos Bay
 - July through Labor Day fishery inside of 20-fathoms is not feasible
 - Close Stonewall Banks or find other method to maintain longer groundfish season. Troll gear only in Stonewall Banks may result in lingcod and halibut targeting and thus incidental yelloweye rf catch
 - Two halibut bag limit may reduce rockfish impacts.

Other Comments

- Newport

- Add a subsistence definition allowing the estuary boat fishery to be open year round
- Brookings
 - Need clarification in the regulations on when a gaff may be used
 - Commercial crab pots near port are a gear conflict with sport salmon trolling
 - Is ODFW spending money on inland fisheries that comes from ocean fisher's licenses?
 - Use rockfish tag dollars for rockfish assessments
 - Concerned about sea lion predation on rockfish (especially yelloweye rockfish)

Table 2. Major Commercial Issues Discussed at Public Meetings reviewing 2007-08 Management Measures

May, 2006

	Brookings	Coos Bay	Newport	Astoria
Number of Public Participants	11	4	3	8
Issues:				
LE Trawl				
Trawl Trip Limits		Dover / Sablefish ratios create sablefish discard. Dover limits should be higher		<p>Alternative 1: Too much Dover will go to waste. Petrale limits should be lower than Dover. Better quality Dover in the summer.</p> <p>Alternative 2: Better than Alt. 1 but still want more Dover. Selective Flatfish gear can't go out to 100 fm; can catch the limit too quickly. May not get to Pacific Cod.</p> <p>Alternative 3: No canary bycatch by Astoria nearshore trawl.</p>
Darkblotched Rockfish		Current regulations are causing a lot of discard mortality		
LE and OA Sablefish				
Sablefish Stock Assessment	Stock is healthy - assessment is wrong	Stock is healthy - assessment is wrong		Stock is healthy - assessment is wrong

Nearshore				
Reduced Black Rockfish Harvest Cap	A better idea is to eliminate gear that has higher bycatch of yelloweye (e.g., longline)		Work on season structure and depth restrictions rather than reduced harvest caps	
Shallower Depth Restriction	A 20 fm restriction was reasonable	Concerned over gear conflicts - Recreational Charter / OA H+L	15 or 20 fathoms OK during the summer. Not OK during the winter as fish disperse and there are safety concerns	
Increase Lincod Trip Limit	Yes	Yes - Dinglebar gear fishes lincod cleanly	Yes - spawning period closure is inconsistent with management of other species (petrale sole)	
Lingcod Minimum Size Limit		Retain the 24" minimum.		
Open access sole limit should be more generous			Lots of sole available nearshore for open access trap gear	
Open Access				
Salmon Troll Lincod Allowance		Yes		Concerned about Salmon trollers targeting Lincod

Other Comments

Astoria

- Who is pushing to have longnose skates assessed and why?
- Why is the money from the overages, in particular hake, going to the state's general fund?
- The hake fishery's bycatch is impacting the bottom trawlers.
- Fishers using hook & line can easily avoid yelloweye so why are they being "punished" by the limitations of longline gear?

Newport

- Need more regional management - even subregions of a state
- Identify preferred gear (low bycatch) for nearshore fishery
- Yelloweye are not caught in traps
- Stock assessments for darkblotched rockfish and sablefish need to factor in mandatory excluder devices in the shrimp fishery.

Coos Bay

- Comment that sablefish traps fish cleaner than longline. Discussion of Amendment 6 and what it would take to separate out traps.

- Need to overhaul of trawl logbooks or all logbooks to make them 'Total Catch' logbooks more similar to Alaska.
- Petrale grounds in Southern Oregon haven't been fished very hard in several years.
- Discussion about splitting the trawlers into two fleets: Big boat / Small boat or beach / deep?
- OA H+L is really two fleets. The lingcod fishermen 25-40 fm and the live fish boats <20 fm
- Low weights of shallow water yelloweye RF catch don't reflect that it's the recruitment (small/young) yelloweye being caught at shallow depths

Brookings

- Black rockfish OY is being stepped down while recruitment curve should be going up if current population models are accurate.
- Large foot rope bottom trawl net designed with an overhang and section of 5" (across diagonal) square mesh at cod end will drastically reduce if not eliminate the catch of small sablefish and rockfish