

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON  
2007-2008 GROUND FISH FISHERY SPECIFICATIONS/MANAGEMENT MEASURES  
AND AMENDMENT 16-4

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held public meetings following the April Council meeting to review and discuss proposed closed areas for protection of overfished rockfish, primarily yelloweye. Anecdotal information communicated to WDFW staff indicated that some of the proposed areas, including portions of the current “C-shaped” closed area, have not produced yelloweye rockfish, whereas other areas consistently contain yelloweye.

To examine this further, we plotted the coordinates of the closed areas with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software with overlays of all available yelloweye rockfish encounter data. Data sources included state observer data from recreational, salmon troll, and exempted fisheries for trawl and longline, groundfish trawl logbook data, and data from the annual International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) halibut survey, the National Marine Fisheries Service triennial trawl survey, and the WDFW submersible survey for yelloweye.

The geological structure of the area off the northern coast of Washington is high rocky relief, which yelloweye tend to inhabit, especially across a large area commonly referred to as “the prairie.” It is important to note that, while there have been yelloweye caught on “the prairie,” the data we have is an artifact of where the data have been collected. For example, the IPHC survey consistently sets on the same locations every year, so we cannot determine whether the catch-per-unit of effort for yelloweye is higher in one location than another, as the entire area has not been randomly surveyed. Additionally, observer data from the salmon troll fishery, as an example, was collected from “the prairie” as that is where a large proportion of the fishery takes place. Over the next two years, WDFW will work with constituents to collect additional data, and review the existing data in more detail, to evaluate additional yelloweye rockfish conservation areas that might be implemented in the future.

However, using the available data, WDFW has developed a new proposal for a yelloweye rockfish conservation area for 2007-08 that overlaps the southern portion of the “C-shaped” area, as depicted by the following coordinates:

Beginning at 48°00.00' N lat.; 125°16.00' W long.  
Then to 48°06.00' N lat.; 125°16.00' W long.  
Then to 48°00.00' N lat.; 124°54.00' W long.  
Then to 48°06.00' N lat.; 124°54.00' W long.  
and back to the point of origin.

This proposed yelloweye rockfish conservation area would be closed to all fishing, including trawl, fixed gear, recreational, and all open access fisheries.

