

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT SUPPORTING ADOPTION OF THE “RAMP-DOWN” YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH OPTIMUM YEILD

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) supports adoption of the “ramp-down” yelloweye rockfish optimum yield (OY). ODFW believes this strategy, while extending the rebuilding time for this stock by ~6 months (estimated to rebuild in the year 2083.5) as compared to the Low OY Alternative (estimated to rebuild in the year 2083), will provide the time required for businesses dependant on recreational and commercial groundfish fisheries (both directly and indirectly) to make appropriate adjustments to business plans, and for fishery managers to collect data needed to develop additional management tools to structure meaningful fisheries under the low OY anticipated in 2011 (13.5 metric tons).

Community Vulnerabilities

The Oregon counties among the 15 counties coastwide that were labeled as “vulnerable” areas (high engagement or dependence on commercial or recreational fisheries and low resilience to change) include Clatsop, Coos, Curry, Lincoln, and Tillamook counties (as noted in Chapter 7 of the preliminary draft EIS, section 7.1.5.2.3, p. 31). Of the 6 counties labeled “most vulnerable”, 2 are located in Oregon (Coos and Lincoln counties). All of the above counties were identified as “vulnerable” in both the commercial and recreational fishery analysis.

Recreational Fishery

Oregon’s marine recreational fisheries are comprised of anglers targeting primarily groundfish, Pacific halibut, salmon, tuna, or a combination thereof. Yelloweye rockfish, deemed most limiting of the depleted species to the recreational fisheries, are impacted in nearly all target strategies, most concentrated in the groundfish and Pacific halibut fisheries. The groundfish and Pacific halibut fisheries have been increasingly restricted for the purposes of reducing impacts to canary and yelloweye rockfishes. Management tools such as time and depth restrictions, non-retention, and area closures have been implemented in both of the key fisheries to conserve depleted species. Additional measures, such as the proposed Stonewall Bank Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area, are being considered for implementation in 2007-2008 to further conserve canary and yelloweye rockfishes.

Under the 12 metric ton yelloweye alternative, the Oregon recreational fishing effort for groundfish and Pacific halibut would decrease by 32% (Chapter 7, section 7.2.10.1.2, p. 50), resulting in an estimated impact to income of \$2.62 million or 34% (Table 7-68d., p. 151). In addition, fishing seasons would be severely shortened which would have additional implications. Fewer tourists would be drawn to communities during times when fishing closures are in place. Support industries such as charter offices, fuel stations, sporting goods stores, marinas, motels, campgrounds, restaurants, grocery stores, and many other local businesses will lose income, and

in some cases, close their business. The economic impacts will be far reaching and much larger than indicated by just examining changes in angler trips.

Under Action Alternative 1, structured to address the Low OY Alternative for yelloweye rockfish of 12.6 metric tons, all Oregon regions are estimated to experience decreases in estimated income generated from recreational groundfish charter boat fisheries that are greater than 39% (Chapter 7, section 7.2.11, p. 53). With regards to income generated by recreational groundfish private trips, all Oregon regions are estimated to experience decreases that are greater than 37%. These reductions are attributed to limited fishery opportunity (fishery open for 2-6 months) and depth restrictions (fishery restricted to waters shoreward of 20-fathoms during the open period). Income loss at these levels will effectively close the recreational groundfish charter boat fishery in Oregon, as the charter industry will not be able to sustain basic operational costs (Supplemental ODFW Report 3, Agenda Item F.2.b, June 2006). Additionally, projected decreases in income would cause undue hardship on Oregon's coastal communities that are already depressed (5 of 7 coastal counties deemed "vulnerable").

To conduct meaningful recreational fisheries with very low impacts of canary and yelloweye rockfishes, ODFW is gathering information related to site fidelity, survivability, effective release methods, and recreational gear selectivity. A variety of research projects are currently being conducted, and are planned to either continue in 2007 and/or be expanded in the future. Results have been summarized for use in public education brochures, scientific journals, and potential inclusion in stock assessments. It is very likely that it will not be feasible to continue this research under the Low OY Alternative for yelloweye rockfish.

Commercial Nearshore Fisheries

Reduced allowable harvest of yelloweye rockfish will also impact various commercial fisheries, including the Oregon commercial nearshore fishery. With regards to the commercial nearshore fishery for the area north of 40° 10' N. Lat., Action Alternative 1, structured to meet allowed impacts under the Low OY Alternative for yelloweye rockfish, would require a 60% reduction of black rockfish harvest. Black rockfish comprise the majority of the catch in this fishery. The fishery is currently operating on very low monthly trip limits (300-600 pounds/month of black and blue rockfish combined). Fishery participants have asserted that the current limits represent the minimum amount of monthly harvest required to be able to maintain business operating costs and viability. Analysis shows that under Action Alternative 1, ex-vessel revenue for the commercial nearshore fishery in the area north of 40° 10' N. Lat. would be reduced by 42% as compared to 2005 revenue (Table 7-54, Chapter 7, p. 124). This estimate is considered to be conservative, as it does not factor in loss to fishery support businesses (i.e. ice plants; fabrication shops, gear manufacturers/suppliers, etc.) and the greater communities. Projected decreases in income would cause undue hardship on Oregon's coastal communities that are already depressed (5 of 7 coastal counties deemed "vulnerable").