

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

**COMMERCIAL**

Open Access (OA) Fixed Gear

*Conception Area sablefish*

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) requested that the GMT analyze an increase in OA fixed gear sablefish south of 36° N. lat. Specifically, the GAP requested an increase in the daily limit to 350 pounds from 300 lbs, and an increase in the weekly limit from 700 lbs to 1,050 lbs. This request would provide fishing opportunities that are equivalent to opportunities in more recent years. The GMT discussed the request, considered the potential impacts on sablefish catch levels, and paid particular attention to the likelihood of effort shifts occurring from vessels currently fishing north of the Conception area. Currently, fishing opportunities north of the Conception area are 300 lbs per day, 700 lbs per week, and 2,100 lbs per two months. Based on analysis of past fishing patterns, increases in the daily limit have resulted in large increases in effort, therefore the GMT did not further consider changing the daily limit. Increasing the Conception area weekly limit to 1,050 lbs per week would result in far greater opportunities than in northern areas and is likely to result in effort shifts toward the Conception area. Therefore, the GMT recommends a moderate increase in the weekly limit to 800 lbs, in order to avoid effort shifts.

*Sablefish Daily Trip Limit (DTL) North of 36° degrees N Lat.*

The GMT received a request to look at an increase in OA DTL limits north of 36° N. lat. Based on analysis of available data it does not appear that an increase can be supported at this time. Projections of catch with existing regulations indicate the OA sablefish allocation will be met. However, the GMT will revisit this issue at the September meeting and recommend inseason action if catch projections are below the allocation.

Limited Entry (LE) Fixed Gear

*Shortspine Thornyheads south of 34° 27' N Lat.*

The GMT was asked to analyze an increase in the LE fixed gear limits for shortspine thornyhead south of 34°27' N. lat. The trip limit in this area is currently 2,000 lbs per two months. As of May 31, the total shortspine Conception area landings are estimated at 60.6 metric tons. The optimal yield (OY) for the area south of 34°27' N lat. (a portion of the Conception area) is 421 metric tons meaning there are several hundred metric tons available for harvest. Recent catch levels in this area have been 120-130 metric tons per year for fixed gear.

The GMT discussed this proposal and paid particular attention to available catch amounts and the potential for effort shifts. Shortspine thornyheads landed in the California bight fetch a high price, with some landings receiving in excess of \$5.50 per pound and prices of this magnitude tend to draw effort. While the amount of shortspine available for harvest in this area is several hundred metric tons, an increase in effort may result in higher sablefish catch and higher catches of other species, and higher than anticipated catch could result in premature closure of other

fishing opportunities. Based on the potential for increased effort, the GMT recommends adopting a measured approach with limits at 3,000 lbs per two months in period 4 with the limit reverting to 2,000 lbs per two months for period 5. The impact of this increase would be evaluated at the September meeting and changes to period 6 limits could be made if appropriate.

#### *Shelf Rockfish off Central California*

The GMT has been asked to look at combining widow, bocaccio, and chilipepper rockfish with the minor shelf rockfish limit off central California for the LE fixed gear fishery. The GMT heard reports that the differentiation of these limits is resulting in high discard levels as one or more of the individual limits is reached. Combining the limits would allow for more flexibility in retention opportunities that would in turn reduce discard. The GMT considered the implication of this request and believes that combining widow and bocaccio into the shelf rockfish complex between 40°10' N lat. and 34°27' N lat., while leaving chilipepper separate, can be accommodated without affecting overfished species catch levels. The GMT recommends a combined widow-bocaccio-shelf rockfish limit be set at 500 lbs per month for the remainder of the year beginning August 1 for LE fixed gears.

#### Limited Entry Trawl

##### *Non-Whiting Trawl Fishery*

At the March 2007 meeting, the Council adopted a complex set of rockfish conservation area (RCA) boundaries north of 40°10' N lat. to reduce canary rockfish catch levels while attempting to provide reasonable economic opportunity. That inseason action closed areas off northern Washington and southern Oregon and more heavily restricted an area north of the Columbia River. Parallel to the change in the shoreward RCA boundary, the seaward boundary was changed to 150 fm north of Cascade Head to encourage trawlers to fish seaward of the RCA where canary bycatch rates are lower. It was expected that this would result in additional darkblotched and POP impacts, but the expected impact would remain within the OY.

Available fish ticket data indicates that the 150 fm line resulted in increased participation by vessels which do not typically fish seaward of the RCA. Several vessels, which were typically thought of as shoreward vessels, fished seaward of the RCA in April. While this should minimize impacts to canary rockfish, the balance between darkblotched impacts and canary impacts must still be achieved as increased participation seaward of the RCA may lead to higher than expected impacts on darkblotched.

An examination of available data shows that generally A) canary rockfish bycatch rates are relatively higher off Washington and relatively lower off northern Oregon, and that B) darkblotched bycatch rates are slightly lower off Washington and slightly higher off northern Oregon. Based on this information, the GMT proposes to move the seaward boundary of the RCA between Cascade Head and the Columbia River from 150 fm to 200 fm starting August 1. This action is expected to reduce darkblotched impacts and move some effort shoreward. An increase in shoreward effort will tend to increase canary impacts; however, those areas off northern Oregon have relatively low canary bycatch rates and overall impacts are still expected to be within the OY.

In addition to the changes in RCA boundaries, cumulative limit adjustments are proposed based on inseason catch levels and vessel attainment of those available limits. Cumulative limit

adjustment proposals are to increase longspine limits for large footrope gear in the north to 25,000 lbs per two months beginning in period 4 for the remainder of the year and to increase Dover sole limits in the south to 80,000 lbs per two months beginning in period 4 for the remainder of the year.

#### *Lingcod Shoreward of the RCA*

The GAP requested that the GMT examine increasing retention of lingcod in the LE trawl fishery in areas shoreward of the RCA. Industry members reported that high discard rates of lingcod are occurring shoreward of the RCA and increasing the trip limits would decrease unnecessary discard. The GMT discussed this proposal in the context of whether allowing for higher retention opportunities would encourage targeting and whether that targeting would result in increased bycatch of overfished species, in particular, canary rockfish. Over the past several years, the price per pound of lingcod in the trawl fishery has averaged just over \$0.60 cents. At current retention limits of 1,500 lbs, this represents just over \$900 per two months. While this is probably not enough revenue to justify a trip, the GMT believes that limits in excess of this amount may encourage some topping off which could result in increased impacts to overfished species. In addition, the lingcod cumulative limit was increased in 2007 and data are not yet available to analyze the effect of that increase. The GMT therefore does not recommend increasing the lingcod limit at this time.

#### *Chilipepper Rockfish South of 40° 10' N Lat.*

In April, the GMT received a request to increase chilipepper rockfish limits for small footrope travels south of 40° 10' N. lat. (Agenda Item E.2.b, April 2007). The GMT made a request to the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) for observer data summaries that would help to estimate the impact of this request. The NWFSC indicated that observations of chilipepper catch were not sufficient to inform this inseason request. Therefore, the GMT is unable to provide a specific analysis pertaining to the potential impacts of an increase in chilipepper opportunity.

Based on the aggregated observer data that is available, the discard rates of chilipepper in the south have been as high as 70-80%. The GMT discussed this amount of discard, potential increases in the chilipepper limit that would reduce discard, and the potential for targeting on chilipepper that may occur if the limit is increased. The GMT is concerned that targeting of chilipepper may result in more bocaccio and widow impacts as those two species tend to be associated with chilipepper. Currently established limits are 500 lbs per month and it does not appear that this limit is resulting in targeting of chilipepper by the non-whiting trawl fishery. Consequently, a modest increase of several hundred pounds should not result in targeting. The GMT recommends that chilipepper limits for small footrope trawls south of 40° 10' N lat. be increased to 800 lbs per month beginning August 1.

#### *Combined Arrowtooth and Other Flatfish Limit North of 40° 10'*

The GAP requested that the GMT re-visit the combined arrowtooth and Other Flatfish limit that was established at the March meeting. The intention of combining arrowtooth and Other Flatfish was to allow for targeting opportunity while achieving reductions in effort necessary to stay within the canary rockfish OY. Some trawlers target arrowtooth while other trawlers target Other Flatfish. To disaggregate these limits could mean reducing both limits by fifty percent, which would reduce target opportunities for all trawlers. Maintaining the current approach (one combined limit) allows for specialization to continue at catch levels that are economically viable.

The GMT discussed establishing a separate arrowtooth limit because industry stated that high discard of arrowtooth has occurred as vessels attempt to fill their Other Flatfish and arrowtooth limit with more valuable species than arrowtooth. The GMT notes that establishing a separate limit on arrowtooth may indeed decrease the discard of arrowtooth occurring on vessels that do not typically target that species; however, it would decrease opportunities for vessels that target arrowtooth. In addition, establishing a separate arrowtooth limit may result in increased effort which would increase impacts on canary rockfish. Therefore, while the GMT acknowledges that unintended regulatory discard of arrowtooth may be occurring, the GMT recommends leaving the combined Other Flatfish and arrowtooth limit as currently scheduled in regulation.

*Pacific Whiting*

The GMT was made aware of higher than projected catch of darkblotched and widow rockfish in the whiting fishery. The California shore-based fishery began on April 1 and the at-sea whiting fisheries (catcher/processors and motherships) began on May 15. Fishers have reported that large aggregations of whiting have been less common early in the season and the fleet is encountering a high incidental catch rate of widow and darkblotched rockfish. The at-sea fleet has made efforts to avoid bycatch, but continues to encounter widow and darkblotched.

The whiting industry had numerous meetings about bycatch of widow and darkblotched rockfish, but has been unable to agree on a solution due to different views regarding the distribution of bycatch limit species between sectors or whether vessels should voluntarily stop or delay fishing. The at-sea fleets have identified the intent to stop fishing if incidental catch of either widow or darkblotched rockfish exceed specified amounts, which would leave bycatch limit species available for the shore-based sector.

The GMT notes that fishing early in the season often takes the bulk of the bycatch caps in the whiting fishery due to a lack of availability of large aggregations of whiting. Bycatch generally decreases later in the season once whiting become more available.

<b>Pacific whiting catch; at-sea data through June 3, 2007, shoreside data through May 26, 2007.</b>					
Sector	Catch by Species				
	Whiting (mt)	Chinook (#)	Canary (mt)	Darkblotched (mt)	Widow (mt)
Shoreside (CA)	2,909	576	0.00	0.96	0.92
Motherships	27,403	90	0.39	6.33	49.20
Catcher/processors	29,262	157	0.07	4.84	38.59
All	59,574	823	0.46	12.13	88.71
Bycatch Limit			4.7	25	220

Proposed Cumulative Limits and RCA Boundaries in the LE Non-Whiting Trawl Fishery

AREA	PERIOD	RCA Boundaries		Cumulative Limits							
		INLINE	OUTLINE	Sable	Longsp	Shortsp	Dover	Other			Slope
								Flat	Petrals	Arrow'th	Rock
NORTH OF 40 10 Large footrope	1	75	250*	13,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	50,000	100,000	4,000
	2			13,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	30,000	100,000	4,000
	3	See Attached Table		15,000	22,000	10,000	60,000	110,000	20,000	combined with other flatfish	1,500
	4			15,000	25,000	10,000	60,000	110,000	20,000		1,500
	5			15,000	25,000	10,000	60,000	110,000	20,000		1,500
	6			13,000	25,000	10,000	80,000	110,000	30,000		1,500
NORTH SFFT	1	75	250*	5,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	16,000	90,000	4,000
	2	75	250	8,000	3,000	3,000	40,000	90,000	25,000	90,000	4,000
	3	75	150	5,000	3,000	3,000	38,000	70,000	20,000	combined with other flatfish	1,500
	4	75	200	5,000	3,000	3,000	38,000	70,000	20,000		1,500
	5	75	200	5,000	3,000	3,000	38,000	70,000	15,000		1,500
	6	75	200*	5,000	3,000	3,000	25,000	30,000	8,000		1,500
38 - 40 10	1	100	200*	14,000	22,000	7,500	70,000	110,000	50,000	10,000	15,000
	2	100	150	14,000	22,000	7,500	70,000	110,000	30,000	10,000	15,000
	3	100	150	14,000	22,000	7,500	70,000	110,000	25,000	combined with other flatfish	15,000
	4	100	150	14,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	25,000		10,000
	5	100	150	14,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	25,000		10,000
	6	100	200*	14,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	50,000		15,000
SOUTH 38	1	75	200*	14,000	22,000	7,500	70,000	110,000	50,000	10,000	40,000
	2	100	150	14,000	22,000	7,500	70,000	110,000	30,000	10,000	40,000
	3	100	150	14,000	22,000	7,500	70,000	110,000	25,000	combined with other flatfish	40,000
	4	100	150	14,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	25,000		40,000
	5	100	150	14,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	25,000		40,000
	6	75	200*	14,000	22,000	7,500	80,000	110,000	50,000		40,000

Proposed RCA Boundaries in Areas north of 40 degrees 10 minutes N latitude

Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) North of 40 10

	JAN-FEB	MARCH-APRIL	MAY-JUN	JUL-AUG	SEP-OCT	NOV-DEC	
North of 48o10.00' N. lat.	75-250*	75-250	shore - 150		shore-200	shore-200*	
48o10.00' N. lat. - 46o38.17' N. lat.			75-150		75-200	75-200*	
46o38.17' N. lat. - 46o16.00 N. lat.			60-150		60-200	75-200*	
46o16.00 N. lat. - 45o03.83 N. lat.			75-150		75-200	75-200*	
45o03.83' N. lat. - 43o20.83' N. lat.			75-200				75-200*
43o20.83' N. lat. - 42o40.50' N. lat.			shore-200				shore-200*
42o40.50' N. lat. -40o10.00' N. lat.			75-200				75-200*

Estimated Impacts From Proposed Trawl Inseason Action

					OY / ALLOCATION
		North	South	Total	
Rebuilding Species	Canary	7.1	1.1	8.1	
	POP	101.9	0.0	101.9	150*
	Darkbltch	212.0	34.7	246.7	290*
	Widow	1.5	0.0	1.6	
	Bocaccio	0.0	25.4	25.4	
	Y'eye	0.4	0.0	0.4	
	Cowcod	0.2	1.4	1.6	
Target Species	Sable	2,099	489	2,589	2,651
	Longsp	698	346	1,044	2220*
	Shortsp	932	225	1,156	1634*
	Dover	7,993	1,780	9,773	16500*
	Arrow'th	3,261	89	3,350	5800*
	Petrals	1,919	391	2,310	2499*
	Otr Flat	1,449	487	1,936	4884*
	Slope Rock	124	155	279	1160*n 626*s

note: a \* indicates the value is an OY

**2007 Projected mortality impacts (mt) of overfished groundfish species under current regulations. Updated with March 2007 inseason adjustments. a/**

3/12/07

Fishery	Bocaccio b/	Canary	Cowcod	Dkbl	POP	Widow	Yelloweye
<b>Limited Entry Trawl- Non-whiting</b>	25.4	8.1	1.6	246.7	101.9	1.6	0.4
<b>Limited Entry Trawl- Whiting</b>							
At-sea whiting motherships		4.7		25.0	1.0	220.0	0.0
At-sea whiting cat-proc					2.9		0.0
Shoreside whiting					1.8		0.0
Tribal whiting		0.7		0.0	0.6	6.1	0.0
<b>Tribal</b>							
Midwater Trawl		1.8		0.0	0.0	40.0	0.0
Bottom Trawl		0.8		0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0
Troll		0.5		0.0	0.0		0.0
Fixed gear		0.3		0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
<b>Limited Entry Fixed Gear</b>		1.1		1.3	0.4		2.9
Sablefish	13.4		0.0			0.0	
Non-Sablefish			0.1			0.5	
<b>Open Access: Directed Groundfish</b>		1.0					
Sablefish DTL	0.0		0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.5
Nearshore (North of 40°10' N. lat.)	0.0	1.7		0.0	0.0	0.1	2.0
Nearshore (South of 40°10' N. lat.)	0.0			0.0	0.0		
Other	10.6			0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
<b>Open Access: Incidental Groundfish</b>							
CA Halibut	0.1	0.0		0.0	0.0		
CA Gillnet c/	0.5			0.0	0.0	0.0	
CA Sheephead c/				0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CPS- wetfish c/	0.3						
CPS- squid d/							
Dungeness crab c/	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0		
HMS b/		0.0	0.0	0.0			
Pacific Halibut c/	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pink shrimp	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Ridgeback prawn	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Salmon troll	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2
Sea Cucumber	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Spot Prawn (trap)							
<b>Recreational Groundfish e/</b>							
WA		5.7					6.2
OR						1.4	
CA	98.0	8.3	0.4			8.0	1.7
<b>Research: Includes NMFS trawl shelf-slope surveys, the IPHC halibut survey, and expected impacts from SRPs and LOAs. f/</b>							
	2.0	7.5	0.1	3.8	3.6	0.9	2.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	150.7	43.1	2.3	277.1	116.0	279.0	18.5
<b>2007 OY</b>	218	44.0	4.0	290	150	368	23
<b>Difference</b>	67.3	0.9	1.7	13.0	34.0	89.1	4.5
<b>Percent of OY</b>	69.1%	98.0%	57.5%	95.5%	77.3%	75.8%	80.3%
Key	= either not applicable; trace amount (<0.01 mt); or not reported in available						

a/ All numbers reflect projected annual total catches except that the non-tribal "Limited Entry Trawl- Whiting" numbers are the total bycatch caps for canary, darkblotched, and widow rockfish.

b/ South of 40°10' N. lat.

c/ Mortality estimates are not hard numbers; based on the GMT's best professional judgment.

d/ Bycatch amounts by species unavailable, but bocaccio occurred in 0.1% of all port samples and other rockfish in another 0.1% of all port samples (and squid fisheries usually land their whole catch).

e/ Values in scorecard represent projected impacts. However, harvest guidelines for 2007 are as follows: canary in WA and OR combined = 8.2 mt and in CA = 9.0 mt; yelloweye in WA and OR combined = 6.8 mt and in CA = 2.1 mt.

f/ Research projections only updated for canary rockfish in November 2006. The other species' updates will be updated in April 2007.