

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON MANAGEMENT
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2009-2010 GROUND FISH FISHERIES – PART II

Agenda Item F.2.c, Supplemental GAP Report of June 2006 outlined and identified the impacts of the effect of management actions specified to minimize the bycatch of overfished species on the fishing industry. This is an update to that report and provides the Council with the rationale and justification for increases in optimum yield (OY) for 2009-2010.

Groundfish fishermen have experienced the negative impacts of many stringent management actions which have created hardship. These actions have reduced fishing opportunities resulting in severe economic hardship to fishermen, processors, and communities. Time/area closures imposed by depth restrictions by geographic area as well as reduced catch limits in the open areas are a few of these actions.

Widow Rockfish – The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) notes the widow rockfish stock is projected to be re-built by 2009; however, fishing on this soon to be rebuilt, healthy stock is not possible until 2011-2012 pending a new full stock assessment. The GAP supports an OY of 522 mt which would provide for an increased harvest of yellowtail rockfish and bycatch needs in the whiting fishery. A 522 mt OY allows full attainment of the whiting OY, as well as partial restoration of the midwater trawl yellowtail fishery. This would facilitate the landing of 40 million lbs of whiting, worth \$3.2 million dollars exvessel value. Yellowtail deliveries of 7.5 million lbs worth \$3.2 million of exvessel value with \$9.4 million community impact could be restored.

Darkblotched Rockfish - The GAP recommends the darkblotched OY be set at the upper end of the OY range, near 300 mt. A 300 mt OY will meet the needs of the industry while making rebuilding progress. An OY less than 240 mt, as projected to be harvested in 2007, will result in additional economic losses to the fleet and communities with little gain in recovery time.

Canary Rockfish - The GAP recommends the 2009-2010 canary OY go forward with a preferred range of 85-155 mt. This range of allowable harvests will restore some of the many lost opportunities resulting from past management decisions. We make the following recommendations for the non-whiting trawl fishery:

1. Reopen the closed areas shoreward of the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) north of Cape Alava on the North Washington Coast. This closure has greatly reduced the opportunity to harvest Pacific cod and arrowtooth as well as other groundfish species. Fishing opportunity should be restored to the fishermen and communities.
2. Reopen the closed area shoreward of the trawl RCA from Humbug Mountain to Cape Arago. Opportunity should be restored to fishermen in this area off the Oregon Coast.
3. Restore shelf fishing opportunities using selective flatfish trawls by opening areas shoreward of the RCA out to 75 and 100 fm through all or a portion of the year. Many options with associated opportunities to increase catch and reduce bycatch impacts would then be available. This action will greatly increase opportunity to harvest Pacific cod valued at \$1.2 million with an

associated \$3.6 million of community benefit. Arrowtooth flounder, which have gone under-harvested in recent years, would also then be available for harvest. Other opportunities which would be available include increased landings of lingcod, yellowtail rockfish, shelf Dover and sablefish. Economic benefits could result by accessing 6,000 mt of Dover Sole, and an additional amount of arrowtooth and Other Flatfish, which are currently under-harvested. Restoration of lingcod harvest to full utilization represents a benefit of \$3.5 million to the fleet and an associated \$10.5 million to affected communities. The GAP estimates an OY range of 85-155 mt will also increase recreational opportunities by about 40%. It is difficult to estimate the economic benefit, but it is a substantial amount.

4. Explore restoring a midwater trawl opportunity to harvest yellowtail rockfish. This species has been significantly under-harvested in recent years with severe impacts to fishermen and market opportunities of flatfish. A mix of round fish is very important in the marketing of sole species. This fishery should be restored, perhaps on a limited basis, given the constraints of other species of concern. The amount of canary needed in this endeavor will depend on the amount of opportunity, area where prosecuted, and time of year.

Cowcod: With respect to cowcod, the GAP recommends an OY of 4 mt for 2009-2010. An OY of 2 mt will impact all sectors including trawl. Trawl impacts are truly incidental and limited to the Monterey area. Reducing bycatch from 2007 will require Draconian measures.

Yelloweye Rockfish - The GAP discussed the impacts of yelloweye rebuilding measures on all sectors. Yelloweye is particularly constraining to recreational and hook-and-line fisheries. While the GAP recognizes the need for the ramp-down strategy, this will entail severe impacts to these fisheries.

In summary, slightly higher OYs for widow, canary and darkblotched rockfish could restore about \$14 million of exvessel revenues to the commercial fleets and \$42 million to the communities with only a slight increase in rebuilding times. Additionally, the GAP believes more recreational opportunities south of 40°10' could be restored. The restoration of fishing opportunities north of the Queets River and in areas adjacent to Mt. Humbug would be possible. The GAP asks the Council to give consideration to the minimum needs of all user groups who depend on fishing.

PFMC
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