

## GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON FINAL CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed inseason adjustments necessary to balance the scorecard as well as bycatch caps for the whiting fishery and has the following comments and recommendations:

### Recreational

The GAP heard a report from John Budrick of the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) on the bycatch rate for yelloweye rockfish in the recreational fishery between Point Arena and the Oregon border.

The GAP supports the CDFG proposed management measures for addressing these problems, including a depth restriction of 20 fathoms, weekly catch tracking and a preliminary catch estimate with a one-month lag time to prevent the fishery from exceeding its harvest guideline of 2.1 metric tons. Ideally, the tracking methods would allow CDFG to project when the harvest guideline would be reached and time closures prior to the harvest guideline being exceeded. The GAP supports a new management line at Point Arena, since most of the yelloweye bycatch occurs to the north of that line. It is our understanding that the Director of CDFG can close any region within ten days notice based on this information.

The GAP supports the CDFG proposed temporary area closures to avoid yelloweye rockfish, and heard from members of the public in the region who supported the area closure at Shelter Cove. Fort Bragg fishermen had some concerns about the placement of two area closures close to the port. Although they were supportive of using the temporary area closures as a management tool to extend the fishing season, they wanted some further discussions with the CDFG about refining these boundaries. If tracking lower than the expected bycatch rates, these areas could be reopened as the season progresses.

An aggressive education and enforcement effort needs to be undertaken to prevent landings in the fishery. There are strong indications that anglers are unable to identify yelloweye rockfish, as well as other overfished species. The largest savings could come from these efforts. Recreational anglers must be made aware that continued high rates of yelloweye bycatch will result in extremely short fishing seasons.

The GAP strongly recommends that California provide timely and accurate catch data to the Council in order to facilitate inseason adjustments and prudent management of California recreational fisheries in order to stay below the yelloweye and canary harvest guidelines.

## Commercial

### *Bycatch Caps for the Whiting Fishery*

The GAP agrees with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) rationale and recommendation for increasing the darkblotched bycatch limit to 40 mt. The limits are not meant to punish the whiting fishery, rather they are meant to be upper limits to prevent inseason impacts to non-whiting fisheries. The bycatch limits are the only numbers in the scorecard that result in immediate closure if attained. With that in mind, the GAP recommends maintaining the canary cap at 4.7 mt. The whiting sectors have learned to manage operations to stay below 4.7 mt. Amounts lower than 4.7 mt will induce changes in fishing behavior, creating a potential race for bycatch. Negative impacts from this behavior could disproportionately harm the shoreside sector because they start after the at-sea sectors. For widow rockfish the GAP supports the current 275 mt amount in the scorecard. The GAP heard from all three sectors of the whiting fishery and all support our recommendations about the bycatch limits.

### *Limited Entry non-whiting Trawl*

The GAP supports the GMT recommended management measures to reduce the canary impacts in the limited entry non-whiting trawl fishery to 9.1 mt which includes some adjustments in trip limits as well as line changes to the RCA.

### *Open Access DTL Fishery*

The GAP agrees with reducing the bi-monthly limit north of the Conception area from 2,400 lbs to 2,200 lbs.

### *Open Access Nearshore South of 40 10 and north of 34 27*

Observer data indicates that the open access nearshore fishery south of 40 10 has projected impacts that are higher than 1.7 mt as was projected during 2007. With the data available to the GMT at this meeting, draconian measures would be necessary for the open access nearshore fishery in order to reduce impacts to 1.7 mt. Instead, the trawl limited entry non-whiting option is willing to make up the difference on canary savings in order to balance the scorecard while additional data is gathered on what is happening in the open access nearshore fishery south of 40 10. That is, the GAP recommends that the observer data be explored to determine if there is a “hot spot” area that is driving the increased interception of canary rockfish and measures could be taken at a later meeting to close these areas and bring the impacts back closer to 1.7 mt. Our understanding is that there has been some resistance from NMFS in the past to provide this data and the GAP requests that the Council encourage the Science Center to cooperate with this data request. This data will also be important as we move into the 2009-2010 SPEX process. We also request that the GMT explore alternate management measures to reduce open access nearshore fishery impacts on canary closer to 2007 levels in the absence of receiving the observer data or if the data results do not send a clear picture of “hot spot” areas that could be closed. The GAP would like to revisit this issue at the April meeting to review the progress that is made between now and then.

Summary of GAP recommendations:

1. Approve CDFG recommendations for changes to the recreational fishery in order to reduce yelloweye and canary catches to keep the state within its harvest guideline for these species. These should be implemented PRIOR to the start of the fishery.
2. Approve bycatch limits for the whiting fishery:
  - a. Canary 4.7 mt
  - b. Darkblotch 40 mt
  - c. Widow 275 mt
3. Approve the trawl limited entry non-whiting trawl to reduce canary impacts to 9.1 mt.
4. Approve the reduction in bi-monthly limits in the open access DTL fishery north of the conception area from 2,400 lbs to 2,200 lbs.
5. No change to the open access nearshore fishery south of 40 10 at this point, explore the observer data to determine if there are areas where canary interceptions are higher and could be closed to fishing in order to reduce impacts.

PFMC  
03/14/08