

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT SUMMARIZING
PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED REGARDING 2009-10 COMMERCIAL AND
RECREATIONAL GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife held a series of public meetings to gather public input on the range of management measures adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council for each of the 2009-10 groundfish fisheries (commercial and recreational). Meetings were conducted in five ports; Tillamook, Newport, North Bend, Port Orford, and Brookings. The meetings consisted of a joint session to discuss regulation setting processes and harvest levels, and break-out session to separately discuss the harvest levels and management measures specific to the recreational and commercial fisheries.

Recreational

Figures 1 and 2 detail the options submitted for the EIS. Table 1 details the waypoint locations for the various Stonewall Bank YRCA options under consideration. Table 2 is a summary of the majority opinions from each meeting as well as a listing of other comments regarding proposed recreational management measures for the 2009-10 groundfish fisheries. Overall, attendees were very concerned about the proposed low level of yelloweye rockfish impacts to be allowed and the potentially devastating reductions in season length.

Maintaining a year round season without further reductions in the marine fish bag limit was a common theme; several anglers proposed increasing the marine fish bag limit due to the expected increase in black rockfish OY. A minority of anglers supported increasing the lingcod bag limit to three fish.

Anglers in the central coast ports of Newport and Depoe Bay recommended no enlargement of the Stonewall Bank YRCA, without first adopting additional closed areas in other parts of the state. No other YRCA were recommended at the meetings.

Maintaining opportunity for flat fish inside the 40-fathom line was a concern. Permitting groundfish retention on directed halibut trips was also recommended, especially in the nearshore area.

Commercial

Nearshore Commercial Fisheries

The turnout and response concerning nearshore issues was by far the greatest among the different commercial fishery sectors. In response to yelloweye constraining the nearshore fisheries, several fishermen thought there were more yelloweye than what the stock assessment indicated. They identified the source of this discrepancy as flawed surveys, and indicated that yelloweye are not in the areas where the surveys are conducted. In addition, they felt surveys and assessments should be conducted annually in order to

provide the best available data for management. Participants were also concerned about the lack of fishery dependent data in the assessment, since retention is prohibited. Among the ports, several common concerns were expressed and issues identified with regard to the proposed management measures, which are outlined below.

Area Management

The use of area management tools to address yelloweye rockfish constraints was by far the most common feedback among the ports. The respondents felt that since yelloweye rockfish populations are localized, reef or smaller area closures would be more appropriate than depth restrictions or trip limit reductions. Attendees also expressed frustration that trip limit reductions to reduce yelloweye impacts had to be implemented north of 40°10 N. lat., instead of by smaller sub-areas. According to the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) data, not all sub-areas north of 40°10 N. lat. have high yelloweye rockfish bycatch rates, however the current structure does not allow for sub-area trip limit management. Furthermore, participants in Pacific City and Garibaldi pointed out that their area had the lowest yelloweye rockfish bycatch rates on the coast. Yet, under the current trip limit reduction proposal they would be just as impacted as an area with higher rates.

Depth restrictions

Moving the shoreward RCA from 30 to 20 fathoms (fm) was an acceptable management measure in most ports, with the exception of Tillamook. In areas around Tillamook, restrictions deeper 25 fm would be preferred and restrictions at 15 fm would be devastating to the fishery. Several participants expressed concern that a federal change in the RCA boundary combined with the potential for state marine reserves may result in greater loss of fishing grounds and increased gear conflicts.

Attendees also pointed out that the majority of the nearshore fishery uses jig gear, which is similar to the rod and reel gear used in the recreational fishery. Therefore, they would expect similar impacts and restrictions between the two fisheries. However, currently the recreational fleet can fish to 40 fm while the commercial nearshore fleet is constrained to 30 fm. Additionally, there are seasons where the recreational fishery can fish at all depths but the nearshore commercial fishery cannot.

Trip Limit Reductions

Respondents stated that a 30 percent reduction in trip limits would put most operations out of business. Attendees requested that the Council analyze the bycatch rates relative to the target species and, if possible, they would prefer that the reductions to trip limits be done only to those target species with the highest bycatch rates. It was speculated that bycatch rates for black and blue rockfish, which are pelagic species, would be less than for demersal target species. If this is true, participants would prefer status quo black rockfish limits, as it is a mainstay of the fishery.

Gear Restrictions

Participants expressed concern over the yelloweye rockfish impacts of longline gear. While the WCGOP data on gear specific bycatch trends were inconclusive, participants felt strongly that use and design of longline gear was directly responsible for high yelloweye rockfish bycatch. For example, during longline fishing a large number of hooks are deployed per set, compared to other hook and line fisheries. If the gear is

inadvertently set in an area with yelloweye rockfish, the potential for catching a large number of yelloweye rockfish is greater. When fewer hooks are deployed (e.g., jig fishing) and yelloweye rockfish are encountered, the vessel has fewer hooks remaining in the water and can easily retrieve the gear and move locations. Most participants recommended restricting or prohibiting the use of longline gear in the nearshore. It is important to note, however, that few longline fishermen attended the meetings.

Several participants recommended that a greater number of state limited entry permits be issued for pot fishing since impacts to overfished species are fewer with this gear type. Currently, the Oregon state limited entry permit program allows for only one pot endorsement.

General Comments

The lingcod stocks are rebuilt and there is concern that the population is overly abundant and adversely affecting overfished species. Lingcod prey on juvenile rockfish and by restricting effort on lingcod we may be inadvertently harming yelloweye rockfish populations. They requested that the Council move forward with ecosystem based management in an effort to understand the predator/prey interactions of lingcod and yelloweye rockfish. They also requested an analysis of a 12 month lingcod season, similar to the Oregon recreational fishery.

Participants also requested that the WCGOP begin collecting data on the disposition of discarded fish in an effort to improve our understanding of discard mortality.

Limited Entry Bottom Trawl

Few comments regarding the bottom trawl fishery were received at the meetings; the majority came during the North Bend meeting. Three primary issues were discussed 1) the success of the selective flatfish trawl in reducing bycatch, 2) lessening impacts to darkblotched rockfish, and 3) adjustments to the shoreward RCA to provide greater access to Dover sole while reducing overfished species bycatch.

Participants noted that the selective flatfish trawl is very effective at reducing rockfish bycatch but participants are not encouraged to use the gear seaward of the RCA. For example, under the current structure, trip limits for sablefish captured with selective flatfish trawl gear are 5,000 lbs/2 months, while the limits for large and small footrope gear ranges from 14,000 to 19,000 pounds. Selective flatfish trawl gear is considered a small footrope gear, however significantly different limits are provided. Participants requested that if selective flatfish trawl gear is used seaward of the RCA, they should fall under the small footrope limits and be allowed to harvest more sablefish. If use of selective flatfish trawl gear is encouraged seaward of the RCA, participants noted that darkblotched rockfish impacts would be fewer.

Participants also requested a shoreward RCA boundary of 100 fm for periods 3, 4, and 5 (status quo is 75 fm). The deeper boundary would allow for shorter tow times, more productive fishing, and fewer overfished species impacts because populations of Dover are greater in the deep. One participant requested that a 100 fm boundary be implemented during periods 2, 3, and 5. He expressed concern that there would be greater effort shift from the inexperienced seaward vessels during period 4, which would result in increased overfished species impacts.

Slope Fixed Gear Fisheries

Fixed gear representatives were primarily from the sablefish fishery, with a few halibut fisherman. Longline sablefish fishermen indicated a depth restriction of 125 or 150 fm would reduce yelloweye impacts and have few effects as fishing is often outside of 150 fm. However, such a restriction would affect halibut fishermen. Participants also noted the potential for increased gear conflicts if the fleet was moved deeper. Sablefish fishermen understood the reasons for switching from longline to pots, however, identified potential problems with such a move. High costs and safety were the primary deterrents. The associated costs of gear (e.g., hydraulic winch, pots, rope) may be preventative to some vessels. In addition, small vessels would not have the room or weight capacity to transition to pots. Longline fishermen may resist such a move as well since longline caught sablefish is worth more per pound and reportedly has greater catches.

Limited Entry Pacific Whiting Trawl

Few comments regarding the Pacific whiting trawl fishery were received at the meetings. Concern was expressed over salmon bycatch, increasing interactions of widow rockfish, and the proposed management measures. Attendees recommended that the Council implement vessel caps or other measures to reduce salmon bycatch in the whiting fishery. Since widow rockfish is nearly rebuilt (est. 2009), some fear it will be more difficult to stay within the bycatch limits. Participants stated that the proposed management measures are a reasonable way to address bycatch issues, however concern was expressed with options that have large fall releases. Shoreside vessels have limited ability to fish in the fall season and thus the late release would favor catcher-processors. Attendees also recommended that the Bandon Highspot, a high relief area within the trawl RCA (approximately 43° N. lat. and 125°50 W. long.), be closed to whiting trawl vessels, in order to reduce rockfish bycatch.

Figure 1. Season structure along with expected yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish impacts for various 2009-10 Oregon sport fishery options

	Month												OR Sport Yelloweye RF (mt)	OR Sport Canary RF (mt)
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D		
1	Open all depth					Open <40 fm 6/1-9/30				Open all depth			2.5	2.5
2	Open all depth					<40 fm 6/20-8/31**				Open all depth			2.5	2.6
3	Open all depth			<40 fm 4/1-9/30						Open all depth			2.2	2.3
4	Open <40 fm												2.0	2.2
5	Open <30 fm												1.8	2.0
6	CLOSED			Open <25 fm 5/1-9/30						CLOSED			1.6	1.7

Figure 2. Stonewall Bank YRCA options (located approximately 15 miles out of Newport).

Stonewall Bank - Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation

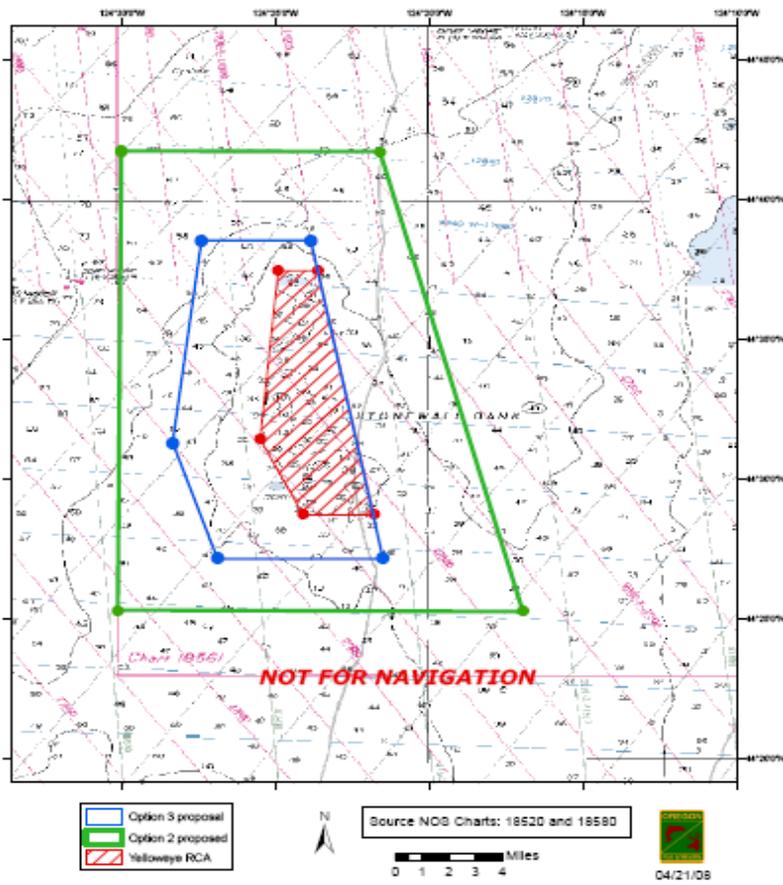


Table 1. Waypoints for the three Stonewall Bank YRCA options

Existing Stonewall Bank YRCA

N Latitude		Longitude	
<u>Degrees</u>	<u>Minutes</u>	<u>Degrees</u>	<u>Minutes</u>
44	37.4580	-124	24.9180
44	37.4580	-124	23.6280
44	28.7100	-124	21.7980
44	28.7100	-124	24.1020
44	31.4220	-124	25.5000

Stonewall Bank Option 2 (largest area)

N Latitude		Longitude	
<u>Degrees</u>	<u>Minutes</u>	<u>Degrees</u>	<u>Minutes</u>
44	41.7594	-124	30.0180
44	41.7348	-124	21.6030
44	25.2456	-124	16.9440
44	25.2942	-124	30.1404
44	41.7594	-124	30.0180

Stonewall Bank Option 3 (medium area)

N Latitude		Longitude	
<u>Degrees</u>	<u>Minutes</u>	<u>Degrees</u>	<u>Minutes</u>
44	38.5440	-124	27.4122
44	38.5440	-124	23.8554
44	27.1320	-124	21.5010
44	27.1320	-124	26.8944
44	31.3020	-124	28.3476

Table 2. Major Sport Issues Discussed at Public Meetings reviewing 2009-10 Management Measures *

	Brookings	North Bend	Newport	Tillamook
Number of Sport Public Participants	~15	~20	~10	~15
Issues:				
Confirm: year round fishery at expense of offshore opportunity and reduced marine bag limit	Majority supported year round fishery	Majority supported year round fishery over increasing the bag limit	Majority supported year round fishery	Split opinion. Best opportunity for Garibaldi is between March and November.
Lingcod bag limit	Majority supported 2 fish	Majority supported 3 fish. Concern was expressed about lingcod predation on rockfish.	Split opinion. Participants favored 2 or 3 fish. Concern expressed over bycatch of "other nearshore" rockfish species, especially quillback.	Majority supported 2 fish
Marine bag limit (rockfish, greenling, cabezon, etc.)	Majority supported status quo (6 fish)	Majority wanted an increase in the bag limit (range 7 to 10). Possible sub-bag for "other nearshore rockfish"	Majority wanted an increase in the bag limit (range 7 to 10). Possible sub-bag for "other nearshore rockfish" and also possibly allow some "red fish" retention	Majority supported an increase to 8 fish (and keep it at that level for several years). Possibly allow 1 canary RF retention.
Reduce Pacific halibut season to achieve longer groundfish season	Yes, as the south coast is penalized since it has no P. halibut to target.	No, but a two halibut daily bag limit may reduce rockfish impacts.	Against voluntarily reducing the halibut season as we will never get the allocation back (someone else will take it).	No support for a voluntary reduction.
Enlarge Stonewall Banks YRCA	No comments as discussion focused on general halibut fishery.	Some support for a larger Stonewall Banks YRCA.	No support for enlargement of the area as there was concern it would prevent possible future yellowtail target opportunities. Would rather see other areas of the state establish YRCA's.	Not much comment as it is not in "our" area
Other Related Proposals/ Issues	1. A few anglers supported annual limits on rockfish and lingcod (tags?) 2. Regional mgt within OR on nearshore species.	1. Allow incidental take of lingcod in the all-depth P. halibut fishery. 2. Regional mgt within OR. 3. Do not support increased allocation of yelloweye RF to California.	Concern was expressed about obtaining the "other nearshore rockfish" annual limit and the possibility it may close the nearshore boat fishery.	Prefer open for groundfish in all-depths in September rather than May as many anglers are fishing halibut in May

* Comments reflect majority opinion. All were informed the shore fishery would be managed for a year round season as yelloweye rf and canary rf are not impacted in the shore fishery.

Other Sport Fishery comments received at the meetings or through individual calls

1. A common concern heard in the ports was that they were not the yelloweye RF problem and that the fishery should be managed regionally (the underlying assumption was that opportunity would increase in that area).
2. Allow flat fish opportunity out to 40-fathoms year round. Adopt hook size restrictions if necessary.
3. Allow halibut anglers to return shoreside of 40-fathoms and retain groundfish as the lingcod and black rockfish status has improved and exceeding the annual catch limit is no longer a concern.
4. Would like any remaining HG added to the next years HG.
5. The yelloweye rockfish allocation should be based on the stock status in each state. California should not see an increase in allocation over 2007-08 as the stock is less than 10% of unfished abundance compared to 20% for Oregon and Washington.
6. There are isolated locations with an overabundance of yelloweye - so let anglers keep yelloweye at those spots.
7. Allow catch and release in the nearshore area rather than total closures.
8. Most anglers don't know what "red" fish can be kept and thus reported releases of yelloweye and canary are over estimates.
9. Close the spring to lingcod.
10. Concern about California anglers fishing in Oregon due to lost opportunity in their state.
11. Adopt a selective fishery for lingcod.
12. Several participants questioned why the lingcod minimum size was reduced from 24-inches to 22-inches (not supported).
13. Why close outside of 100 fathoms? The commercial hook-and-line fishery is open outside 100 fathoms.
14. Do not yet California overages close the Oregon fishery.
15. A 10 fish bag limit (8 marine fish and 2 lingcod) is an attractive sell.
16. Canary rockfish are abundant and anglers should be allowed to keep at least one.
17. If Stonewall Bank area enlarged it should only apply to the halibut fishery, do not take away anymore offshore groundfish opportunity off Newport.
18. Keep spring break open for groundfish.
19. Allow 1 "red fish" retention as it would provide information on status of yelloweye and canary rockfish.
20. Close nearshore over the winter, but leave offshore open.
21. Increase the halibut daily bag limit to two fish.