

THE GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON CONSIDERATION OF
INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS (INCLUDING PACIFIC WHITING BYCATCH LIMITS)

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) considered the most recent information from the west coast Groundfish Observer Program, including the Estimated Discard and Total Catch of Selected Species for 2007 (the Total Mortality Report), and the status of ongoing fisheries. The following considerations and recommendations are offered.

Research

The GMT received an update from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Region (NWR) relative to changes in estimated research catches in the scorecard. The set-asides identified during the 2009-2010 specifications and management measures cycle were all appropriate with the exception of the expected yelloweye impacts. Due to a lack of funding, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) will be unable to conduct the enhanced rockfish survey work in conjunction with the International Pacific Halibut Commission annual longline survey during 2009, as they did in 2008. Predicted levels, including other ODFW sponsored research, results in a reduction of estimated yelloweye impacts from 2.8 to 2.4 mt.

Recreational Fisheries

2008 Fisheries

The GMT received reports from Washington, Oregon, and California regarding catch estimates for the 2008 recreational fisheries. None of the catch estimates indicate that harvest guidelines for overfished or target species were exceeded in 2008.

2009 Fisheries

The GMT received a request to examine expansion of the season south of Point Arena by approximately two weeks either by starting on June 1 or ending on November 15. The season is currently scheduled from June 13 to October 31. The 2009 season for the North-Central South of Point Arena Management Area is constrained by the projected catch of blue rockfish and potentially by other species as well (e.g. minor nearshore rockfish South or yelloweye) under the current season structure. If inseason information becomes available indicating lower impacts of constraining species, it may be possible to extend the season later in the year. Therefore, the GMT does not recommend changing the season structure at this time.

A second request was received for an allowance of 1 canary in the marine fish bag limit for the California recreational fishery, but the GMT notes that this concept was considered but rejected for further analysis during the biennial specifications and management measures cycle. While bag limit adjustments may be routine inseason management measures, the GMT does not recommend allowing retention of overfished species due to concerns over unquantifiable targeting that might occur.

Commercial Fisheries

Limited Entry non-whiting Trawl Fishery

The GMT received an updated set of bycatch data from the west coast Groundfish Observer Program. Based on this data, the estimated catch of overfished species in the non-whiting trawl fishery was revised. These updates are shown in Attachment 1.

RCA Changes

The GMT received a request to examine changing the shoreward RCA boundary north of 40° 10' N. lat. from 75 fm to 100 fm for one two-month period in either periods 2, 3, or 5. The GMT notes that this would increase yelloweye and canary impacts putting catch levels very near the optimum yield (OY). Therefore, the GMT recommends no changes to the shoreward Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundary north of 40° 10' N. lat. at this time, but will revisit the issue as more information becomes available.

Slope Rockfish including Darkblotched

The GMT received a request from the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) to explore providing more opportunity for deep water species if there is enough darkblotched available. As a result of the updated trawl bycatch model, the GMT scorecard indicates that over 40 mt of darkblotched is available to the fishery. The GMT would like to note that increased uncertainty exists for darkblotched catch estimates in the current year due to the change to a 3-month (increased from 2 months in 2007-2008) time period where the modified 200 fm RCA line is established for 2009-2010. Therefore, the GMT does not recommend developing management measures at this time that would take the entire darkblotched OY, but do provide increased opportunity earlier in the season when DTS species are more available. As more information on the current fishery becomes available, it may be appropriate to craft measures that would more fully take the darkblotched OY; however, given the surplus in the scorecard, the GMT identified fishing opportunities that the Council could recommend to more fully utilize the darkblotched OY at this time:

- Increase shortspine thornyhead limits to 19,000 lbs/2 months beginning in period 3 through the end of the year coastwide (large footrope only in the North).
- Increase slope rockfish limits north of 40° 10' N. lat. to 2,500 lbs/2 months beginning in period 3 through the end of the year.
- Increase sablefish N of 40 10 with large footrope to 24,000 lbs from period 3 through period 5.
- Increase sablefish S of 40 10 to 21,000 lbs beginning period 3 through period 6.

Chilipepper Rockfish

The GMT received a request to increase chilipepper limits in the non-whiting trawl fishery in areas south of 40° 10' N. lat. The GMT notes that chilipepper limits in areas shoreward of the trawl RCA were increased to 5,000 lbs /2 months beginning in 2009 and the effect of those limits is not yet known. However, the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) total mortality reports indicate that bocaccio bycatch in the trawl fishery has been declining over the past several years and as a result opportunities may exist for increasing chilipepper opportunities in the south. The GMT plans to more fully evaluate opportunities for chilipepper rockfish in the south and report back to the Council at a subsequent meeting.

Canary Rockfish

The GMT further notes that based on the latest observer data from the 2007 Total Mortality report that the canary OY was exceeded that year. Beginning in 2007, the Council began implementing relatively restrictive RCA boundaries that closed off two areas north of 40° 10' N. lat. in order to protect canary rockfish. The Total Mortality Report indicates that the catch of canary rockfish in the non-whiting trawl fishery was higher than anticipated, even with these additional closures. However, in 2008, canary bycatch estimates were inflated by the GMT to account for differences between NWFSC estimates of mortality, and trawl bycatch estimates of mortality. A similar comparison based on the 2009 trawl model shows that applying 2007 regulations results in estimates of 2007 trawl mortality very similar to what is contained in the Total Mortality Report. Therefore, the GMT believes that the existing model with updated bycatch rates provides a realistic estimate of canary rockfish catch in the non-whiting trawl fishery.

Table 1. Expected impacts associated with LE trawl recommendations.

Overfished Speices				
	North	South	Total	
Canary	11.8	4.4	16.3	
POP	81.6	1.2	82.8	
Darkblotch	173.2	43.0	216.2	
Widow	8.1	10.2	18.3	
Bocaccio	1.0	14.2	15.2	
Yelloweye	0.3	-	0.3	
Cowcod	-	1.7	1.7	

	Target Species			OY/Allocation
Sablefish	2,351.1	589.7	2,940.8	3,005
Longspine	434.6	337.2	771.9	2,175
Shortspine	994.0	329.3	1,323.3	1,591
Dover	10,349.9	2,829.4	13,179.3	16,500
Arrowtooth	2,297.1	91.6	2,388.8	10,112
Petrals	2,021.8	344.1	2,365.9	2,393
Otr Flat	1,723.5	643.2	2,366.6	4,884
Slope Rk	83.0	181.4	264.4	1160N/626S

Limited Entry Non-Tribal Whiting Trawl

Bycatch limits

Among the new management measures for inseason management of whiting in 2009-2010 are sector-specific bycatch limits for the three non-tribal sectors of the Pacific whiting fishery. The bycatch limit for each species is apportioned among the sectors based on the same percentages used to allocate whiting: 42 percent going to the shore-based sector, 34 percent going to the catcher/processor sector, and 24 percent going to the mothership sector. These percentages are fixed in Federal Regulations. As of March 1, 2009, the sector specific bycatch limits for canary, widow, and darkblotched rockfish are listed in Table 1 below. A summary of bycatch limits, associated whiting allocations, and catch by year are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. 2009 Regulatory bycatch limits for canary, widow, and darkblotched among non-tribal whiting sectors.

	Canary (mt)	Widow (mt)	Darkblotched (mt)
Catcher-processors	6.1	153	8.5
Motherships	4.3	108	6
Shorebased	7.6	189.0	10.5
Total (mt) *	18	450	25

Table 3. Pacific whiting allocations and bycatch limits with associated catch and bycatch summary by year for 2005-2008. SS=shorebased, CP=catcher-processor, and MS=mothership.

Species	Sector	2005		2006		2007		2008	
		Alloc/Cap	Catch	Alloc/Cap	Catch	Alloc/Cap	Catch	Alloc/Cap	Catch
Pacific whiting	SS	97,469	97,381	97,469	97,297	87,398	73,280	58,669	50,423
	CP	78,903	78,890	78,903	78,864	70,751	73,263	115,789	108,121
	MS	55,696	48,571	55,696	55,355	49,942	47,809	58,087	57,432
	TOTAL	232,068	224,842	232,068	231,516	208,091	194,352	232,545	215,976
Canary	SS		2.22		1.64		2.01		1.66
	CP		0.34		0.10		0.35		2.43
	MS		0.70		0.85		1.62		0.74
	TOTAL	4.7	3.26	4.0 - 4.7	2.59	4.7	3.98	4.7	4.83
Darkblotched	SS		5.34		2.28		0.95		0.94
	CP		5.95		6.73		5.28		2.40
	MS		5.08		4.24		6.73		3.93
	TOTAL	NA	16.37	25.0	13.25	25.0	12.96	40.0	7.27
POP	SS		0.52		0.14		23.14		0.07
	CP		0.78		0.75		2.92		12.83
	MS		0.86		1.88		0.73		2.93
	TOTAL		2.16		2.77		26.79		15.83
Widow	SS		77.15		49.38		88.97		99.09
	CP		43.14		67.00		72.77		52.37
	MS		35.50		71.80		72.99		60.75
	TOTAL	200 - 212	155.79	200 - 220	188.18	200 - 275	234.73	275.0	212.21
Yelloweye	SS		0.01		0.06		0.04		0.00
	CP		0.00		0.01		0.01		0.01
	MS		0.00		0.02		0.00		0.00
	TOTAL		0.01		0.09		0.05		0.01

Widow Rockfish

The GMT notes that for widow rockfish the Council decision in June was to hold all sectors harmless and allocate up to the remainder of the OY to the non-tribal whiting fisheries. Based on the latest observer data, impacts for the Limited Entry non-whiting trawl fleet result in the need to decrease the widow bycatch limit for non-tribal whiting. The GMT requests guidance on whether the Council intends to utilize the entire remainder of the widow OY for that limit.

Darkblotched Rockfish

As with the non-whiting trawl fishery above, the GMT considered the remaining darkblotched rockfish in our current scorecard projections and suggests that the Council could consider increasing the bycatch limit. Any increase would continue to be distributed in a pro-rata fashion across the 3 non-tribal whiting sectors. The GMT notes that the darkblotched limit has been higher in recent years (Table 3) and an increase from 25 mt would allow greater flexibility to the fleet inseason.

Pacific Ocean Perch

In reviewing the NWFSC 2007 Total Mortality Report, the GMT noted that the OY for Pacific Ocean perch was exceeded. The GMT further notes that in 2007, the whiting fisheries took over 27 metric tons of Pacific Ocean perch (POP), which was much higher than the 1.9 metric tons anticipated in September 2007. We attribute this large POP catch to the fact that the fishery was closed early in the year as a result of attainment of a bycatch limit. The subsequent late season re-opening forced fishing effort to occur in deeper water (due to a whiting fishery RCA restriction to reduce impacts on canary rockfish). Based on the existing management measures, the GMT believes that a premature closure of the fishery is less likely in 2009, and therefore does not believe that catch of POP will be as high as that observed in 2007. Should RCA restrictions be considered later in the year, the GMT will explore the potential for increased impacts to POP at that time. The current projected POP impacts in the scorecard reflect the weighted average from 2003-2006.

Limited Entry Fixed Gear

The GMT received a request from industry representatives to examine changing the seaward non-trawl RCA boundary from 125 fm to 100 fm during some portion of the season from July to September for the portion of the coast from 43° N. lat. to Cascade Head (45° 03.83' N. lat.). The GMT is currently exploring inclusion of a finer scale and temporal variation in our fixed-gear model based on the delineation of the latest observer data and will revisit this request later in the year.

Open Access Fishery North of 40° 10' N. lat.

Black Rockfish

The GMT received a request to analyze increasing black rockfish limits in the open access fishery north of 40° 10' N. lat. Black rockfish limits are currently “5,000 lb/ 2 months, no more than 1,200 lb of which may be species other than black or blue rockfish” in the area north of 42° N. lat. and “6,000 lb/ 2 months, no more than 1,200 lb of which may be species other than black or blue rockfish” for the area between 40° 10' N. lat. and 42° N. lat. Unfortunately, the GMT was not able to fully analyze implications of this request in light of the new observer data at this meeting.

While the Oregon fishery is currently open, the California fishery is closed and will not re-open until May 1, 2009. The GMT also notes that Oregon's state trip limits are lower than the federal limits; therefore any increase to trip limits afforded by this request would affect California only. NMFS staff also indicated that if the Council chose to increase limits at the April Council meeting, the regulatory change could likely occur on or just after May 1. Because the request was for an increase in trip limits, it could take effect upon implementation and would not have to wait until the start of a cumulative two-month period. Therefore, the GMT recommends revisiting this request at the April Council meeting so we can examine the impacts of this increase on minor nearshore rockfish and overfished species.

Lingcod

The GMT also received a request to examine allowing lingcod retention for an extra month beginning in April. It is our understanding that the December through April closure has been in place since 2004, as a result of the last full assessment, to protect spawning individuals. The GMT notes that modifying this spawning closure was not analyzed during the biennial specifications and management measures cycle; therefore the effects of changing the current season structure are unknown. The next full assessment is scheduled for 2009 and this request can be included on the list of issues for the next specification and management measures cycle during the November meeting. The GMT does not recommend modifying the lingcod spawning closure at this time.

Open Access Sablefish Fishery N of 36°

The GMT also received requests to examine maintaining or increasing the bi-monthly limits for the DTL fishery north of 36° N. lat. (currently 2,400 lb/2 months) rather than decreasing to 2,200 lbs/2 months beginning May 1st. Even with the expectation of another relatively poor salmon year (and the corresponding increased effort), model results indicate that the increase could be accommodated while still staying within the Open Access allocation as well as current projected impacts to overfished species. Therefore, the Council could consider increasing the bi-monthly limit up to 2,500 lbs/2 months beginning May 1.

GMT Recommendations:

1. Consider increases for slope rockfish and associated DTS species for the limited entry non-whiting trawl fishery.
2. Select a revised widow bycatch limit for the non-tribal whiting fishery.
3. Consider increasing the darkblotched bycatch limit for the non-tribal whiting fishery.
4. Consider increasing the bi-monthly limit for Open Access sablefish North of 36° up to 2,500 lbs/2 months beginning May 1.

Attachment I. Updated Scorecard

Projected mortality impacts (mt) of overfished groundfish species updated with most recent West Coast Groundfish Observer data for LE trawl, nearshore, OA DTL, LE FG.

Fishery	Bocaccio b/	Canary	Cowcod	Dkbl	POP	Widow	Yelloweye
Limited Entry Trawl- Non-whiting	15.1	16.2	1.3	214.4	82.1	18.1	0.3
Limited Entry Trawl- Whiting							
At-sea whiting motherships a/		4.3		6.0	1.1	105.5	0.0
At-sea whiting cat-proc a/		6.1		8.5	1.1	149.4	0.0
Shoreside whiting a/		7.6		10.5	0.3	184.6	0.0
Tribal whiting		2.1		0.0	1.1	5.5	0.0
Tribal							
Midwater Trawl		3.6		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
Fixed Gear Sablefish	0.0	0.3	0.0	1.0	0.2	0.3	1.1
Fixed Gear Nearshore	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.9
Fixed Gear Other	5.0	0.0	0.0	9.0	0.0	0.7	0.0
Open Access: Incidental Groundfish	2.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	0.3
Recreational Groundfish c/							
WA		20.9					5.2
OR						1.0	
CA	67.3		22.9	0.1		6.2	
EFPs	13.7	2.7	0.3	1.3	0.0	5.5	0.3
Research: Includes NMFS trawl shelf-slope surveys, the IPHC halibut survey, and expected impacts from SRPs and LOAs.							
	2.0	8.0	0.2	2.0	2.0	1.1	2.4
TOTAL	105.1	100.1	1.9	252.7	91.6	522.0	15.6
2009 OY d/	288	105	4.0	285	189	522	17
Difference	182.9	4.9	2.1	32.3	97.4	0.0	1.4
Percent of OY	36.5%	95.3%	47.5%	88.7%	48.5%	100.0%	91.9%
Key		= either not applicable; trace amount (<0.01 mt); or not reported in available data					
<p>a/ Non-tribal whiting values for canary, darkblotched, and widow reflect bycatch limits for the non-tribal whiting sectors. The widow bycatch limit is the difference between the OY and the projected impacts in all non-whiting fisheries. All other species' impacts are projected from the GMT's whiting impact projection model. The Council may elect to change these bycatch limits when setting final whiting management measures in March of 2009 or 2010 or under any inseason action at any of their future meetings.</p> <p>b/ South of 40°10' N. lat.</p> <p>c/ Values in scorecard represent projected impacts for all species except canary and yelloweye rockfish, which are the prescribed harvest guidelines.</p> <p>d/ 2009 and 2010 OYs are the same except for darkblotched (291 mt in 2010), POP (200 mt in 2010), and widow (509 mt in 2010).</p>							

PFMC
03/10/09