

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED ROCKFISH  
SPECIES IN THE RECREATIONAL FISHERY

Mr. Russell Porter of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the treatment of unidentified rockfish within the Recreational Fisheries Information Network (RecFIN), including a historical perspective and differences among States in the way that this catch category is tracked and recorded. Mr. John Budrick (California Department of Fish and Game [CDFG]) and Ms. Lynn Mattes (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife [ODFW]) of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) were present to answer questions regarding written materials that were provided by ODFW and CDFG. The SSC also received a written report from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on this subject.

Unidentified rockfish catches from recreational fisheries are currently not taken into account in stock assessments, the setting of optimum yields (OY), or the tracking of catches against limits. The amount of unidentified rockfish in each state is small, but not insignificant, compared to identified catches, and the proportion of unidentified catch has been trending down in recent years, apparently due to angler education efforts and public awareness that overfished species may not be retained. Preliminary analyses presented in the State reports indicate that this unaccounted catch is probably not of sufficient magnitude to have caused the OY for any overfished rockfish to have been exceeded in recent years.

It is consistent with the goal of total catch accounting for this source of additional impacts to be included in rockfish management. However, there does not appear to be an immediate conservation concern related to this issue, and development of a solution represents a significant additional workload. There is a range of possible ways to apportion this catch by species, and differences exist in the data collected among States that complicate potential solutions. Therefore, the SSC recommends that the RecFIN staff be asked to work with state representatives to partition the unidentified rockfish catch to species so that the results can be incorporated into management as soon as is practical. The SSC suggests that any proposed analytical protocols should be reviewed by the RecFIN Statistical Committee before they are considered for use in stock assessments or management decisions.