

Agenda Item D.4.a  
Supplemental GF ESA Workgroup PowerPoint  
(Electronic Only)  
June 2015

# Groundfish Endangered Species Workgroup Report

June 2015

Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting

# Biological Opinions

- In 2012 NMFS and US Fish and Wildlife Service completed biological opinions on the Groundfish Fishery.
- NMFS BiOp covered:
  - Southern green sturgeon, eulachon, marine mammals, and leatherback sea turtles.
- USFWS BiOp covered:
  - Short-tailed albatross, marbled murrelet, California least tern, southern sea otter, and bull trout.

# The Workgroup – Who We Are

- The Workgroup consist of representatives from:
  - West Coast Groundfish Observer Program
  - NMFS West Coast Region
  - USFWS
  - State management agencies
  - Tribal representative
  - 4 Taxa Experts (marine mammals, sea turtles, eulachon, seabirds)

# Workgroup Meeting

- The Workgroup met over 3 days and received 6 reports.
  - Southern green sturgeon
  - Eulachon
  - Humpback whales
  - Short-tailed albatross
  - Effort
  - Night setting

# Overall of Recommendations

- Implement logbooks for all Federal fisheries to improve documentation of fishery activities.
- Examine statistical methods being used in the drift gillnet fishery to address rare events with protected species to see if they are applicable to the Groundfish fishery.

# Effort Report

- Required by the BiOp – done biennially
  - Examine changes in fishing effort by gear type that may result from the implementation of the IFQ fishery.
- Take home messages
  - IFQ - Trawl and fixed gear, have shifted northward.
  - Tow hours for bottom trawl have decreased.
- No Workgroup recommendations.

# Humpback Whales

- There were no documented takes of humpback whales from 2010-2013.
- ITS - 5 year average of 1 whale per year, and up to 3 whales per year in a single year.
- ITS has not been exceeded.
- One take in 2014, outside of reporting period, will be addressed through next reporting cycle.

# Humpback Whales Recommendations

- Address potential future problems of interaction with stored or derelict gear:
  - Investigate whether storing gear at sea is of a magnitude to warrant regulatory changes (e.g. surveying fishermen).
  - Promote voluntary use of gear-finder technology.

# Leatherback Sea Turtles

- There were no documented takes of leatherback sea turtles from 2010-2013.
- ITS - 5-year average of 0.38 turtles per year and up to 1 turtle in a single year.
- ITS has not been exceeded.

# Leatherback Sea Turtle Recommendations

- Address potential future problems by increasing documentation of turtle interactions.
- Add to observer training a requirement to take pictures of any sea turtles that are brought onboard, if feasible.
- Modify observer coverage plan to increase the coverage rate in the open access fishery.
  - The Workgroup notes that moderate increases in observer coverage does not lead to a more realistic estimate for those species where fishery interactions are rare. Also, in fisheries with moderate interactions with particularly critical species, increasing observer coverage will result in tighter confidence estimates.

# Eulachon

- Take in 2011 was 1,624 fish, with 1,271 fish caught in the catcher processor sector.
- Take in 2013 was 5,115 fish, with 4,139 fish caught in shoreside whiting fishery.
- ITS – 1,004 fish per year.
- The ITS has been exceeded.

# Eulachon Recommendations

- Reinitiation or a modification to the ITS on eulachon. This should include an estimate that accounts for the variation in eulachon abundance, and includes the shorebased hake fishery, as well as bottom trawl and at-sea sectors.

# Green Sturgeon

- 4.4 fish in 2010, 20.9 fish in 2011, 12.1 fish in 2012, and 5.5 fish in 2013, all from the IFQ bottom trawl and at-sea sectors.
- ITS –
  - Non-lethal bycatch handling - 28 fish per year, and up to 86 fish per year in no more than 2 years within a period of 9 consecutive year
  - Lethal bycatch – 2 fish per year, and up to 7 fish per year in no more than 2 year within a period of 9 consecutive years
- ITS has not been exceeded.
- No recommendations at this time.

# Short-tailed albatross

- 2012-2013 average short-tailed albatross take, using expanded annual estimates of black-footed albatross (BFAL) as a proxy ranged from 1.35 to 3.4/STAL per year, using a lower short-tailed albatross global population estimate to 1.45 to 3.75 STAL per year, using a higher global population estimate.
- ITS – yearly average of one STAL, and not to exceed an average of 2 over a 2 year period.
- The ITS has been exceeded

# Short-tailed albatross recommendations

- Reinitiate consultation -
  - Develop an ITS that adapts to population estimates; population estimate could be based on yearly population growth, averages over several years, etc.
  - Update the ITS estimate to include new information, (e.g., the 25% increase in the short-tailed albatross population since the 2011 take estimate was calculated, improved estimates in relative abundance and distribution of short-tailed albatross to black-footed albatross).
  - Incorporate new fishing gear modifications and potential future changes.
  - Redo the Risk Assessment

# Night Setting

- Recommendation
  - Consider delaying implementation of the night setting exemption.
  - Further analysis should include an examination of implementing streamer lines for boats smaller than 55 ft, floating gear, night setting, differences in encounter rates based on area and depth, and sector, and a comparison of the effectiveness at reducing seabird bycatch between streamer lines and night setting.

# Biennial Reporting Process

Winter Even Year/ Early in Odd Year – Biennial Fleetwide Expanded Bycatch reports are drafted



Spring in Odd Year – WkGrp meeting to discuss biennial bycatch reports



June Odd Year Council Meeting – Workgroup recommendations are presented to Council



Fall in Odd Year – Workgroup Recommendations forwarded from the Council

# Annual Reports

Summer in Every Year – annual observed bycatch tables are distributed to Workgroup



Fall/Winter Every Year – Workgroup meets to discuss annual reports, if necessary.

# Council Action

- Recommendations – Council Action

## **Overall**

### *Workgroup recommendations:*

1. Implement logbooks for all Federal fisheries to improve documentation of fishery activities.
2. Examine statistical methods being used in the drift gillnet fishery to address rare events with protected species to see if they are applicable to the Groundfish fishery.

## **Humpback Whales**

### *Workgroup recommendations:*

1. Because there were no takes during the time period, there is no overage to address.
2. Address potential future problems of interaction with stored or derelict gear:
  - a. Investigate whether storing gear at sea is of a magnitude to warrant regulatory changes (e.g. surveying fishermen).
  - b. Promote voluntary use of gear-finder technology.

## **Leatherback Sea turtles**

### *Workgroup recommendations:*

1. Because there were no takes during the time period, there is no overage to address.
2. Address potential future problems by increasing documentation of turtle interactions:
3. Add to observer training a requirement to take pictures of any sea turtles that are brought onboard, if feasible.
4. Modify observer coverage plan to increase the coverage rate in the open access fishery.
  - a. The Workgroup notes that moderate increases in observer coverage does not lead to a more realistic estimate for those species where fishery interactions are rare. Also, in fisheries with moderate interactions with particularly critical species, increasing observer coverage will result in tighter confidence estimates.

## **Eulachon**

### *Workgroup recommendations:*

1. In two years during the current reporting period, there is an overage of take that is possibly attributable to population fluctuations.
2. Reinitiation or a modification to the ITS on eulachon. This should include an estimate that accounts for the variation in eulachon abundance, and includes the shorebased hake fishery, as well as bottom trawl and at-sea sectors.

## **Green Sturgeon**

### *Workgroup recommendations:*

1. Because the takes were fewer than projected, there is no overage to address.
2. The Workgroup did not have any recommendations at this time. When better estimates are available, the Workgroup would consider the new information and make any recommendations, which may include reinitiation or modification of the ITS, as appropriate.

## **Short-tailed albatross**

### *Workgroup Recommendations:*

1. Because the take exceeded the ITS, there is an overage to address by reinitiating consultation -
  - a. Develop an ITS that adapts to population estimates; population estimate could be based on yearly population growth, averages over several years, etc.
  - b. Update the ITS estimate to include new information, (e.g., the 25% increase in the short-tailed albatross population since the 2011 take estimate was calculated, improved estimates in relative abundance and distribution of short-tailed albatross to black-footed albatross).
  - c. Incorporate new fishing gear modifications and potential future changes.
  - d. Details would be addressed in consultation between NMFS and USFWS.

## **Night setting exemption**

### *Workgroup Recommendations:*

1. Recommend that the Council consider recommending NMFS delay implementing a night setting exemption to the streamer line requirement and wait for further vetting through the Council and its advisory bodies. The Workgroup believes the priority is to finalize the current streamer regulation (without further delay) and make modifications in the near future. This recommendation was not supported by some on the Workgroup who believe the exemption is appropriate for implementation.
2. Recommend the Council request NMFS redo the risk assessment as part of the reinitiation.
3. Further analysis and consideration of management measures should include an examination of implementing streamer lines for boats smaller than 55 ft, floating gear, night setting, differences in encounter rates based on area and depth, and sector, and a comparison of the effectiveness at reducing seabird bycatch between streamer lines and night setting.

Questions