

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON SPECIFICATIONS  
PROCESS FOR 2017-2018 MANAGEMENT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with Mr. John DeVore to discuss harvest specifications and management measures for 2017-18.

Harvest specifications

The GAP considered the range of alternatives offered in [Agenda Item H.5.a, Supplemental Revised Attachment 1](#) and, in general, agrees with those ranges, especially as we anticipate more information coming in November.

With respect to widow and darkblotched rockfish annual catch limits (ACLs), the GAP suggests analyzing alternative 2017 and 2018 widow and darkblotched ACLs by setting the ACLs equal to the acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for these two species. Higher widow and darkblotched ACLs would provide all fleets, but primarily the at-sea sectors, more flexibility to harvest their target species due to the minimal allocation of these species to the at-sea sectors. The risk of setting a higher ACL for widow is lessened due to a new understanding of stock status, as identified in the recent stock assessment. Furthermore, any directed widow fishery, now an option due to its rebuilt status, has fewer canary rockfish bycatch concerns because canary also is rebuilt. The darkblotched stock is projected to be rebuilt in 2016. There is no longer any reason to be artificially constrained by the default ACLs of 406 mt in 2017 and 419 mt in 2018 as per the rebuilding plan.

Management measures

GAP members considered the range of proposed management measures – both the “green light” fishery management plan amendment and the two alternatives proposed for big skate management – and agrees these should provide an adequate range for analysis. The need for a green light mechanism is important, as the GAP noted in its comments in June, as we anticipate more species being declared rebuilt in the near future. Furthermore, recent landings of big skate also indicate it should be actively managed. We will have more comments on these issues in November, as the harvest specifications process progresses and new methods for determining big skate overfishing limits (OFLs) are reviewed.

The GAP received a request to consider a new management measure under the 2017-18 specifications process that would allow trawl catcher vessel quota holders in the mothership fishery to transfer a limited amount of their quota pounds for canary, darkblotched, Pacific ocean perch, and widow rockfish from their shoreside IQ accounts to the Whiting Mothership Cooperative. The GAP supports this request and believes it meets the requirements of a new management measure, as it will help the whiting mothership sector to attain their whiting allocation. The GAP believes allowing mothership CV owners to transfer a limited amount of their shoreside quota of these species will not have an impact on the shoreside trawl fisheries if the inclusion of this request in the 2017-18 specifications process does not delay timely implementation of the 2017-18 regulations.

CDFW staff has indicated that they are exploring ways to give fishermen more access to presently closed areas including RCAs and CCAs. These considerations include converting RCAs to YRCAs and CCAs to cowcod hotspot exclusion areas. The GAP supports this initiative. The State of California indicated that this was a workload that they would take on themselves.

The GAP also recommends an analysis of discard mortality rates for the nearshore species including yelloweye rockfish.

**Summary of recommendations** Explore ways to give fishermen more access to presently closed areas including RCAs and CCAs. Convert CCAs to cowcod hotspot exclusion areas.

**Harvest spex alternatives for analysis:**

1. Widow ACL=ABC; and
2. Darkblotched ACL=ABC.

**New management measure alternatives for analysis:**

- Include “green light” and big skate alternatives for analysis, as listed under this agenda item;
- Analysis of voluntary transfer of bycatch species quota to the mothership sector as listed in [H.5.b, Public Comment](#);
- Analyze alternative discard mortality rates for the nearshore species and yelloweye rockfish; and
- Explore greater access to the present RCAs and CCAs.

PFMC  
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