

PUBLIC WORK SESSION
On the Effects of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery
on ESA listed Pacific Salmon

On July 29, 2015 NMFS held a four hour work session to engage stakeholders on the Endangered Species Act consultation reinitiation for fishing under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. In particular, NMFS was seeking information on how the different stakeholders see the groundfish fishery changing in the next few years and how that will affect the amount and distribution of salmon bycatch. NMFS was also interested in hearing about the types of measures that will be supported by the various stakeholders, including fishing constraints that may be reasonable to manage salmon bycatch while allowing the groundfish fishery flexibility to harvest target species.

The work session began with the presentation by Susan Bishop on salmon bycatch in the groundfish fishery. The presentation was followed by a series of questions in which stakeholder input was sought. In addition, NMFS posted a video of the presentation and accepted public comment from July 16, 2015 through noon August 7, 2015. During the work session the following questions were presented for discussion:

1. Salmon Bycatch Framework
 - a. Should a different framework for salmon bycatch thresholds be considered?
 - b. What action should be taken when the salmon bycatch or bycatch rate thresholds are reached?
2. What actions should be taken prior to reaching the bycatch threshold?
 - a. To slow the catch of salmon and reduce the likelihood of exceeding the bycatch threshold, should inseason interim thresholds be adopted? If so, how far should the threshold be below the bycatch allowance? For which fisheries is inseason information currently available?
 - b. If interim thresholds were used, what associated management actions would allow the groundfish fishery to continue when those thresholds were reached, but effectively reduce salmon bycatch?
 - c. Different bycatch thresholds or suites of actions for different salmon abundance regimes?
 - d. Salmon IBQ?
3. What actions should be taken in addition to those already in place to minimize salmon bycatch (all fisheries or by sector)?

4. Are there existing management measures adopted to reduce salmon bycatch that restrict the groundfish fishery and are no longer necessary or are not effective at reducing salmon catch?

5. As stakeholders how do you see the groundfish fishery changing in the next few years and how does that change the magnitude and distribution of salmon bycatch in the different sectors i.e., coastal location, depth, time, gear, area restrictions?

Summary of work session discussion

The information in the following summary has been aggregated by topic. Although it is intended to fully capture the work session discussion, it may not necessarily align with the order of the actual discussion. The following captures feedback from the stakeholder community. Although NOAA Fisheries participated in the discussion, it made no decisions or took any positions on the feedback itself.

Framework for bycatch thresholds

- Consider adding a new category for midwater trawl. The participants are not necessarily the same as the shorebased whiting IFQ participants. The allowed monitoring varies between the target strategies.
- Consider an approach that varies the threshold allowance relative to salmon abundance. May be possible at the regime level.
- Changes to threshold values (11,000 for whiting and 9,000 for bottom trawl and fixed gear) are being considered given available data. Rational is being sought relative to changing the values or for keeping them where they currently are. Regardless, emerging fisheries such as the midwater non-whiting trawl fishery which previously were diminimus will need to be accounted for either as its own threshold or part of another.
- Change framework to use a single threshold for all sectors with a reserve amount set aside. Re-initiation of consultation would only occur if the overall bycatch threshold were exceeded. The reserved amount could be used for a sector(s) that exceeds their threshold. Each sector would have guideline amount that did not lead to reinitiation. Pre-specified management measures would be implemented for a sector if a certain level was reached and would stay in place. This approach could prevent more frequent reinitiation.
- Guidelines for the whiting sectors would include the 100 fm closure if the guideline was exceeded (approached?). For the at-sea sectors the coop agreements are sufficient and no new guidelines are needed.

Action that could be taken prior to reaching a bycatch threshold

- Relative to the at-sea whiting sectors, coop agreements have more stringent restrictions for member vessels when the rate exceeds 0.05 chinook/mt of whiting. Salmon move so quickly that it is really far more effective to have the voluntary movements and actions. The coops have measures that take little time to go into place. The coop vessels are monitored by observers and the data goes to Seastate and is pushed back to fleet within 24 hr. Vessels must move if the rate

is too high. It is an immediate response (within 24 hr). If they do not move they are in violation of coop agreement which has teeth. This is the most effective way to curb action.

- Voluntary action to move is more timely and effective than anything that can be mandated in regulation.
- Closed areas may not accomplish what you are trying to do if it paints the industry into a box where they cannot practicably conduct the fishery.
- Industry need precise information inseason including areas with high catch rates (i.e. Heceta bank). Vessel and fleet data is extremely important inseason.
- Fishery differences such as fishing depth, vessels size, need to be considered (Shorebased whiting vs at-sea whiting).
- A broader use of the coop approach with application to the shorebased IFQ fleet should be considered, along with a quick turn-around in data. The industry needs a lot of flexibility in dealing with bycatch.

Varying thresholds by salmon abundance

- Really difficult one. Yes, we may know in advance that there will be poor returns but inseason we cannot know where those fish go. It just seems so improbable to direct a bycatch fishery given low returns of a salmon stock on a certain river because may put additional pressure on other salmon stocks or groundfish species of concern. It is a real juggernaut trying to balance all the different things. Too complicated to just close areas with high bycatch, e.g., Hecata Bank.
- Allow higher amounts in years when salmon high, restricting in years when salmon are low. A sliding scale for salmon bycatch that varies from year to year may be tough given that there seems to be no abundance correlations.
- It would be too difficult use abundance estimates for triggering action. A regional aggregate abundance may be possible where it would set up some type of threshold that would trigger a one tier action based with aggregate abundance. It could be used as a very infrequent and precautionary approach when there is a widespread regional issue, only when a dire situation exists. Most of the time the low abundance threshold would not be expected to be achieved.

Salmon IBQ

- It may be the way to go, but it's kind of scary.
- IBQ would require a huge amount of work and thought. Have to come up with a total allowable catch level for salmon. How would you allocate salmon given new use of midwater trawl, bottom trawl with area considerations, and shorebased whiting. It is a huge undertaking.
- May be interesting in the future, but should not be worrying about it right now. Not sure the exercise is worth spending a whole lot of staff and industry time doing.

- Stay away from a food fight and hard caps.

Actions that could be taken in addition to those already in place.

- Hot spot closures compresses fishing in a smaller area.
- Coop permit application does not require a description of the coop's enforcement and penalty provisions relative to salmon, but we provide as a courtesy.

Existing management measures that are no longer necessary.

- The restriction of processing south of 42° N. lat. is not effective. Allowing processing south of 42° N. lat. would allow fishermen to seek out areas of lower bycatch. Particularly, with a rationalized fishery. The prohibition currently compresses the at-sea whiting fishery and puts more focus on Hecata Bank which you have identified as a hot spot of high salmon bycatch. Bycatch is sufficiently closely monitored and fleet can move to address bycatch. Coop agreements not reflected in recent info presented by NMFS.

Changes coming in the groundfish fishery.

- Expect increased participation in at-sea south of 42° N. lat. Reduced salmon bycatch because of management measures adopted through mothership coop. Don't know distribution of fleet.
- It is difficult to say how having canary rockfish rebuilt will affect salmon bycatch. If having canary rockfish rebuilt results in allocation changes, there could be a significant shift in salmon bycatch down the road.
- Opening the RCAs may have an effect. Fishermen's inexperience could have a terrible impact, we just do not know.
- Fishermen in the bottom trawl fishery are cooperating more with each other and acting like coops.
- I do not envision much changing for the at-sea whiting fishery. It is really driven by the available OY through the US/Canada structure. We are doing well relative to what is practicable. The rules we have in coops and risk pools seem to be working well. We do coop agreements annually and submit to NMFS. The number of vessels, when we fish, and the number of processors will be about the same.
- An EFP to fish off CA to see what kind of whiting fishing may be available may be submitted at future date. The EFP proposal would be for the MS sector.
- It has been so long since bottom trawl has been allowed in the RCAs that we do not know what we will encounter.

- Greenie and Brownie (widow and yellowtail rockfish) guys want to develop their fishery. This may have some sort of interaction with salmon.

Miscellaneous

- The whiting fishery is fishing where the whiting are and we don't know until after we have been there if there are salmon there. Until you look at an area you do not know what is there. If you close an area and put a fishery into another area there could be other bycatch problems. It is all tied together.
- The actual performance by industry has been really good. Management issues in terms of threshold have been good. National Standard 9 says to reduce bycatch to extent practical. How do you make it practicable to harvest groundfish? Whiting OYs were high while traditional bottom trawl fishery catches were low, so the 20,000 was not exceeded. The premise is that we are doing good relative to ESA species.
- The at-sea coop restrictions are not in law, but if you saw how strict they are you would understand.
- In the Shoreside IFQ fishery information flows and is working to get people to understand where high bycatch may be occurring.

Work Session Attendees

NOAA

Laurie Beal
 Susan Bishop
 Ryan Couch
 Kevin Duffy
 Kevin Ford
 Melissa Hooper
 Larry LaVoy
 Peggy Mundy
 Karen Palmigiano
 Becky Renko
 Maggie Smith
 Vanessa Tuttle

James Mize
 Dale Myer
 Brent Paine
 Dan Waldeck

State Management

John Budrick
 Jessi Doerpinghaus
 Craig Foster
 Joanna Grebel
 Anna Holder
 Andre Klein
 Daniel Kratville
 Traci Larinto
 Bob Leos
 Alex Letvin
 Caroline McKnight
 Heather Reed
 Anthony Shiao
 Jennifer Simon
 Marci Yaremko

Tribes

Marlene Bellman
 Jennifer Hagen
 Sandy Zeiner

Trawl Industry

Steve Bodnar
 Craig Cross
 Heather Mann
 Scott McMullen

Council Staff

Mike Burner

Kit Dahl

NGOs

Gway Kirchner

Seafood Processors

Rod Moore

Others

Karl Haflinger

2 unidentified individuals