

## WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON 2017 AND 2018 GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) described some of our management measure recommendations under Agenda Item F.3, including at-sea set asides, canary rockfish allocation, and adjustments to the trawl rockfish conservation area (RCA). In this report, we introduce our recommendations for recreational management measures and provide a summary of the other recommendations, which are described in more detail in Agenda Item F.3.b, Supplemental WDFW Report.

### **Recreational Management Measures**

WDFW met with stakeholders on February 5, 2016, to review and discuss proposed recreational management measures. Based on the stakeholder input we received and discussions during the meeting, WDFW recommends the following management measures described for the Washington recreational fishery, beginning in 2017. It is our intent to have most, if not all, of these measures in place for 2018; however, depending on the performance of the 2017 fishery, WDFW may recommend inseason revisions to the bag limit, the canary rockfish sub-limit, and lingcod closed area.

#### ***Bag Limits and Sub-limits***

##### **Recommendation:**

Marine Catch Areas 1 and 2: Aggregate bag limit of 12 groundfish which includes a sub-limit of 10 rockfish, including up to 1 canary rockfish, 2 lingcod, and 2 cabezon (i.e., status quo with additional canary rockfish sub-limit).

Marine Catch Areas 3 and 4: (*Status Quo*) Aggregate bag limit of 12 groundfish which includes a sub-limit of 10 rockfish, 2 lingcod, and 1 cabezon.

**Discussion:** For all areas, this represents the status quo relative to the aggregate groundfish and rockfish bag limits, which received unanimous support from all stakeholders coastwide. Charter operators and anglers referenced the healthy status of targeted stocks, primarily black rockfish and yellowtail rockfish. While recent catches of black rockfish in the Washington recreational fishery are just under the harvest guideline, WDFW's bag limit and effort analysis demonstrates that the fishery is likely to stay under its harvest guideline in 2017 and 2018 with the status quo bag limit.

The notable difference in the bag limits is the allowance for the retention of one canary rockfish in the South Coast and Columbia River areas (i.e., WDFW Marine Catch Areas 1 and 2). During our stakeholder meetings, we heard a desire to retain up to a sub-limit of two canary rockfish in these southern areas. This request is supported by its rebuilt status and promotes consistency with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, which has allowed the retention of canary rockfish since 2015. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that we would begin with an allowance for one canary rockfish and then reassess at the end of 2017 to determine whether the

retention should continue and if an increase in the sub-limit to two canary rockfish should be implemented for 2018.

North Coast representatives supported the approach described above for the southern coastal areas, but were concerned about the potential misidentification of yelloweye rockfish, which are more abundant in the northern part of the coast. North Coast representatives also stressed the need to continue outreach and education efforts in this area, which has a higher percentage of private boat anglers compared to charter.

In consultation with stakeholders and WDFW enforcement, it was agreed that having a difference in canary retention between the North Coast and South Coast would likely not pose a compliance or enforcement problem.

### ***Recreational Season Dates***

#### **Recommendation:**

Marine Catch Areas 1, 2, and 3: Bottomfish and lingcod seasons would open on the second Saturday in March and continue through the third Saturday in October.

Marine Catch Area 4: Bottomfish season would open on the second Saturday in March and continue through the third Saturday in October; lingcod season would remain status quo (i.e., April 16 through October 15).

**Discussion:** The recommendation described above is a revised version of Alternative 1, which would implement a recreational bottomfish season coastwide (currently open year-round under status quo). The lingcod seasons in Marine Catch Areas 1, 2, and 3 would be adjusted to match up with the new bottomfish season; the lingcod season in Marine Catch Area 4 would remain status quo for consistency with the season inside the Strait (i.e., Area 4B) and Puget Sound.

This management measure would maintain bottomfish targeted fishing opportunities during peak months between March and October. While catches are relatively low from October through March, our analysis indicates that as much as 5 mt of black rockfish may be saved by putting the bottomfish season in place. Charter operators and anglers indicated they would prefer to forego harvest opportunities in the October through March timeframe, to a closure in the September/October months due to achieving the Washington recreational black rockfish harvest guideline inseason. As an added benefit, this measure would align recreational seasons with WDFW Ocean Sampling Program's active sampling months in coastal ports.

### ***Modify Recreational Deepwater Lingcod Closure***

#### **Recommendation:**

Marine Catch Area 1: (Alternative 1) Revise the current deepwater lingcod closure by moving the southern boundary northward five nautical miles. Specifically, fishing for, retention, or possession of lingcod is prohibited seaward of a line connecting the following coordinates: 47°31.70' N. lat., 124°45.00' W. lon. (Queets River), to 47°38.17' N. lat., 124°30.00' W. lon., to 47°38.17' N. lat., 124°21.00' W. lon., to **46°33.00' N. lat., 124°21.00' W. lon.** (See Attachment 1, which compares this recommendation with status quo.)

**Discussion:** WDFW staff worked with stakeholders to refine the current boundary of this area to allow additional access to deepwater lingcod areas without expected increases in yelloweye rockfish catches. WDFW Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco/Chinook) has limited habitat that supports yelloweye rockfish and, when compared to management areas to the north, has historically had minimal yelloweye rockfish catches.

### ***Charter Logbooks***

WDFW is currently implementing a volunteer logbook for charter vessels for coastal groundfish fisheries in 2016 and has worked with stakeholders on the design and use of electronic logbooks. WDFW will continue to work with the charter industry toward requiring state groundfish logbooks for all charter vessels potentially beginning in 2017 or 2018. As an added benefit, this measure would support the state's coastal marine spatial planning efforts.

### **Other Recommendations for 2017 and 2018 Groundfish Fisheries**

As noted above, the following is a summary of our recommendations for at-sea set asides for canary, darkblotched, and widow rockfish; canary rockfish allocations and harvest guidelines; and modifications to the trawl RCA. These recommendations and the rationale for them are described in more detail in Agenda Item F.3.b, Supplemental WDFW Report.

#### ***At-Sea Set Asides for Canary, Darkblotched, and Widow Rockfish, and Pacific Ocean Perch (POP)***

The proposed set aside amounts for the catcher processor and mothership sectors for these stocks are described in Table 1. We would note that the widow rockfish set asides represent the status quo levels (i.e., Amendment 21 percentages under the proposed ACL), whereas we are proposing slightly higher allocations for darkblotched rockfish and POP than what is currently in place.

WDFW is proposing that the amounts described in Table 1 would be managed as set asides, rather than “hard caps” or quotas, for each of the at-sea sectors. We believe that by taking a set aside approach, this would address the concern that these stocks may be overly constraining and could potentially impede the at-sea sectors’ ability to fully achieve their respective whiting harvest allocations.

Table 1. Proposed at-sea sector set asides (mt) for canary, darkblotched, and widow rockfish, and POP for 2017 and 2018.

Stock	Catcher-Processor	Mothership
Canary Rockfish	16	30
Darkblotched Rockfish	25	20
Widow Rockfish	370	261
Pacific Ocean Perch	20	15

#### ***Canary Rockfish Allocation, Set Asides, and Harvest Guidelines***

WDFW proposes the canary rockfish allocation alternative in Table 2, which includes set asides for the at-sea sectors and harvest guidelines for trawl and non-trawl fisheries, including state-specific recreational harvest guidelines, for further analysis and Council consideration.

Table 2. WDFW proposed canary rockfish allocation alternative (mt) for 2017 and 2018.

Off-the-Top Deductions		
	Tribal	35
	EFP	1
	Research	7.5
	OA Incidental	1.5
Trawl		
	CP Set Aside	16
	MS Set Aside	30
	Shorebased Trawl IFQ	950
Non-Trawl		
	Non-Nearshore	15
	Nearshore	50
	WA Recreational	20
	OR Recreational	40
	CA Recreational	60
Total		1226

Given all of the considerations described in Agenda Item F.3, Supplemental WDFW Report, we believe that this proposed allocation alternative is consistent with all of the goals of the groundfish Fishery Management Plan, and especially the economic and utilization goals, and would achieve a “fair and equitable” sharing of canary rockfish.

***Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) Modification (North of 40°10’N. latitude)***

WDFW recommends removing the trawl RCA closure north of Cape Alava, Washington (48°10’N. latitude) and extending the shoreward and seaward RCA boundaries north of 40°10’N. latitude to the U.S./Canada border.

As noted in Agenda Item F.3, Supplemental WDFW Report, this RCA closure was developed and proposed as an inseason measure in March 2007 with the intent of protecting canary rockfish. Given that the trawl fishery is now managed under a catch share program with individual accountability, canary and widow rockfish stocks are rebuilt, and the unlikelihood of trawlers encountering high levels of yelloweye rockfish while targeting midwater stocks or avoiding rocky habitat, WDFW believes that removing the RCA closure north of Cape Alava warrants further consideration.

The map below compares WDFW's recommended modifications to the recreational deepwater lingcod closure in Marine Catch Area 1 (dashed line) to the status quo closure (solid line).

