

# NMFS Report on Trawl Gear Modifications EFP (Agenda Item F.5)

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PFMC Meeting, Garden Grove, CA

November 18, 2016

# EFP proposal

- Exemption from selective flatfish trawl inshore of RCAs north of 40.10N.
- Exemption from minimum mesh size for bottom trawl.
- Objective is to target increased trawl allocations for widow, yellowtail, and chilipepper rockfish.
- Objective to collect information to inform the regulations and ESA-consultation.

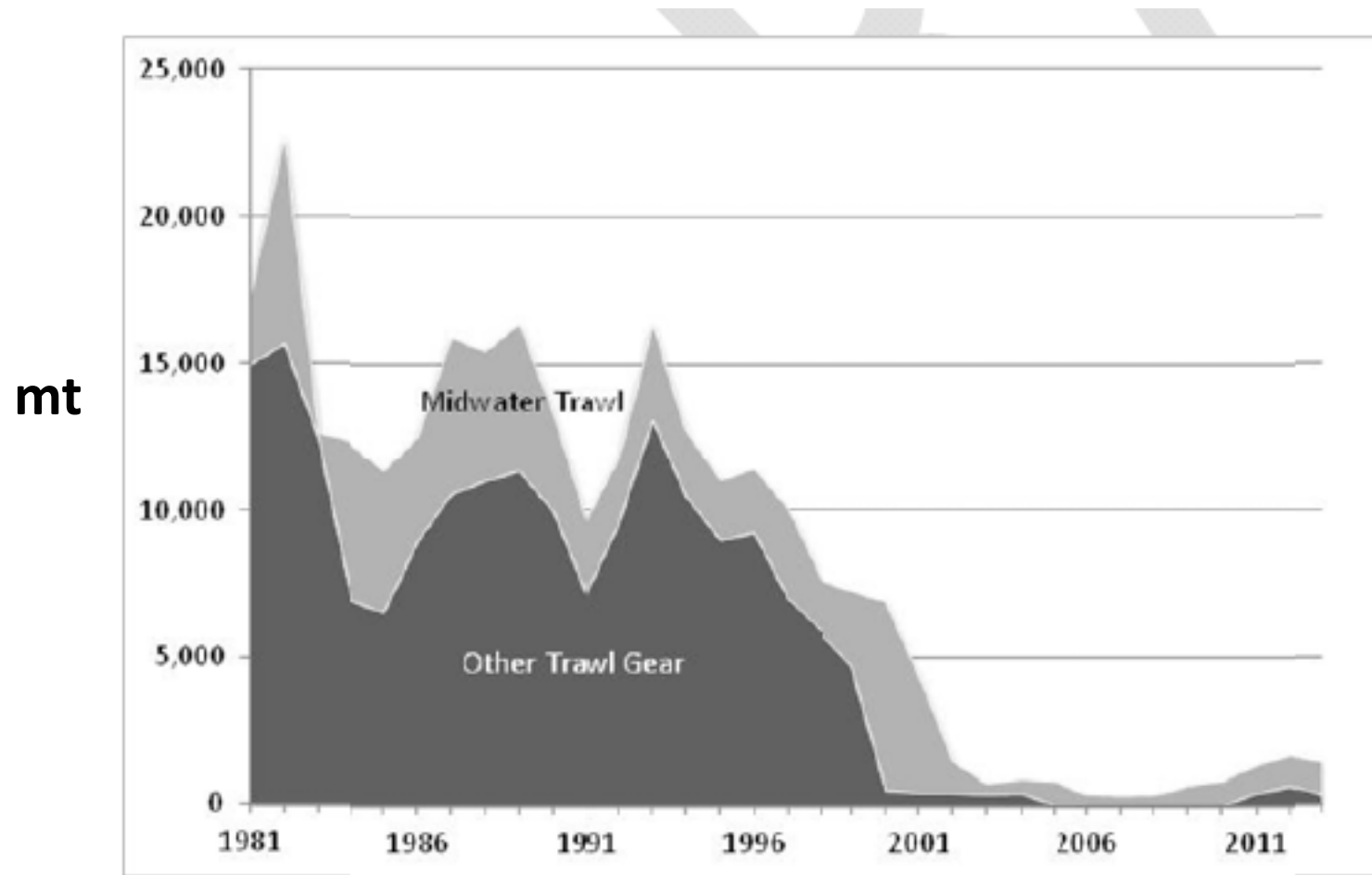
# EFP proposal

- Outstanding issues:
  - Amount of Chinook salmon limit
  - Closed or restricted areas - Eureka, Klamath, and Columbia River
  - Allow EM or not?
  - Level of participation/control of participation

# Relationship to Gear Rule & Salmon BiOp

- Consultation has been reinitiated and is ongoing for Chinook.
- Draft BiOp analyzes the continued operation of the fishery (“proposed action”).
  - Council is considering different “actions” for consultation.
  - Until Council decides on final “action” for consultation, not clear if regulatory changes under development (gear rule, RCA and EFH changes) will be covered in BiOp.
  - If not, additional analysis and consultation will be needed on those actions.
    - As a result of those consultations, those rules could include additional measures to reduce salmon and other ESA bycatch before being implemented.

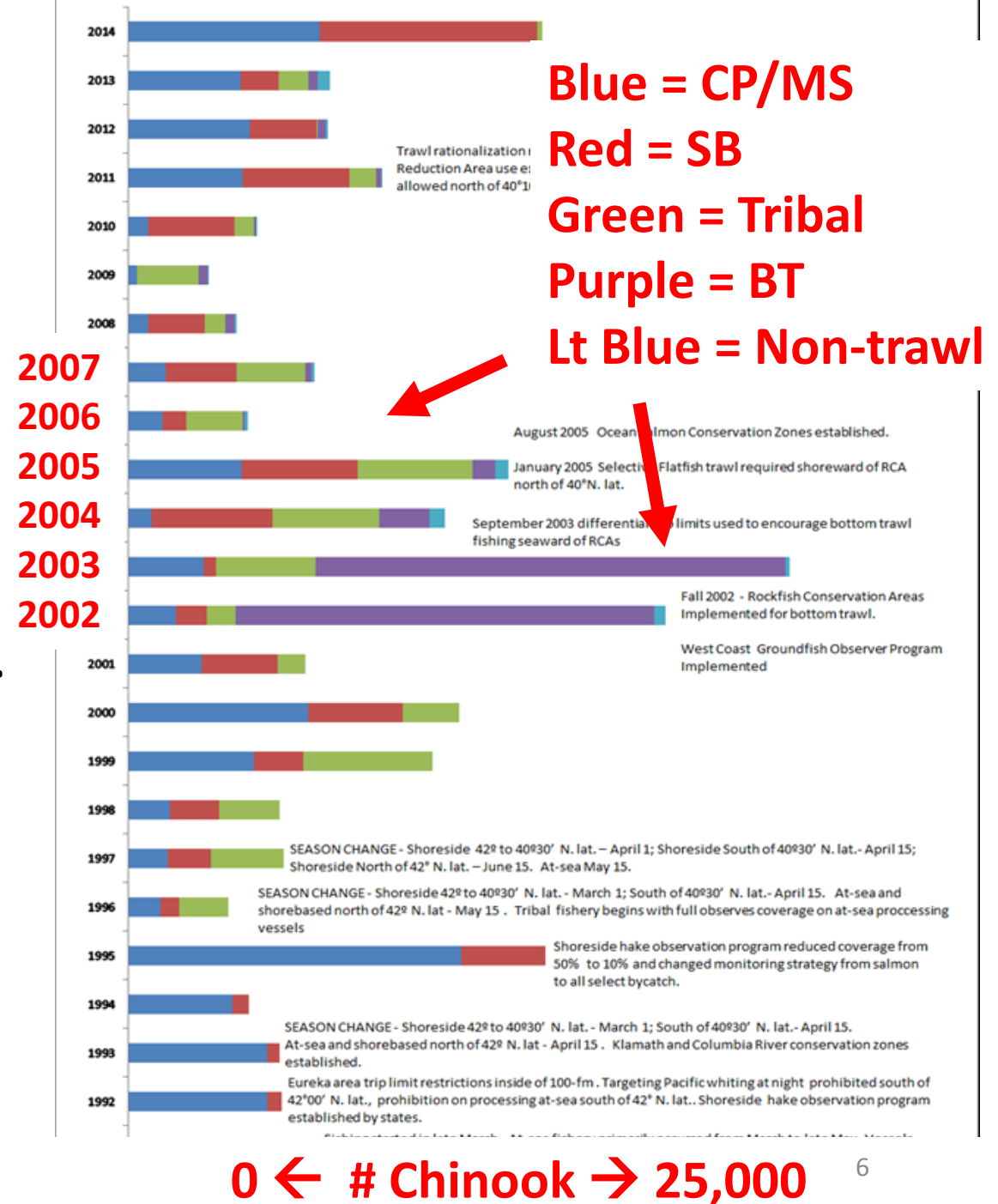
# Effort expected to increase



**Figure 6.** Landings of widow and yellowtail rockfish by trawl gear type, 1981-2013 (PFMC 2015)

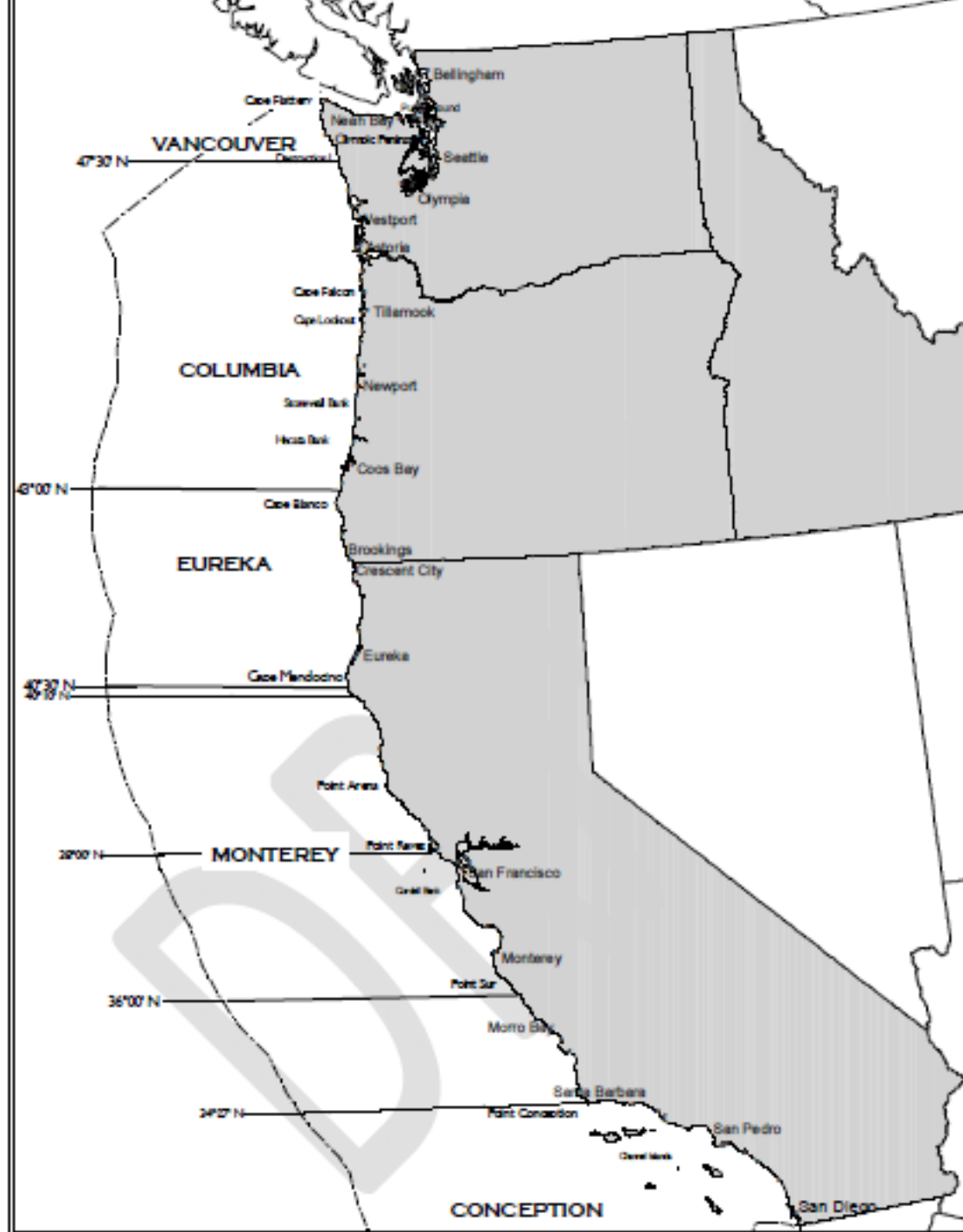
# Bycatch Concerns

- Bycatch of Chinook was also high during the 1980s-1990s.
- Chinook bycatch declined with implementation of measures to reduce of overfished rockfish fishery.
- Correlated with shift of effort offshore.
- Will Chinook bycatch increase when effort increases inshore again?



# Bycatch Concerns

- ITS of 6,000-9,000 Chinook/year for bottom trawl and non-whiting midwater trawl.
  - 5,000-8,000 Chinook/year from Columbia and Vancouver Areas.
  - 1,000 Chinook/year from Eureka Management Area.
  - Based on fishery distribution, gear, effort in 2002-2004.





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  - 1,000 Chinook/year from Eureka Management Area.
  - Based on fishery distribution, gear, effort in 2002-2004.
- ITS of 1,004 eulachon/year for entire trawl fishery.
- ITS of 86 green sturgeon/year for entire trawl fishery.
- Consultations reinitiated and ongoing for Chinook and eulachon.  
**Have to keep impacts to within existing BiOps and ITSs until these are complete.**

# NMFS Recommendations

- Required Elements

- Chinook bycatch limit based on projected effort and recent bycatch rates
  - Back of the envelope 2,500-3,000 for EFP.
  - Looking for GMT recommendation.
  - NMFS would monitor using PSMFC reports, as well as fish tickets, CM reports, observer data, and VMS.
- Sub-limit for Eureka Management Area of 17% of EFP limit
  - Whiting fishing limited in this area to reduce bycatch of salmon.
  - Area of higher intercept of Central California ESUs (also Klamath proxy).
- Columbia River and Klamath River Salmon Conservation Zones
  - Whiting fishing prohibited in these areas to reduce bycatch of salmon.
  - Proposing to extend to EFP vessels, which may fish more like midwater trawl than bottom trawl. They would be able to fish with SFFT in this area as under current regs.

# NMFS Recommendations

- Required Elements

- 100% observer coverage (no EM)

- EM can monitor for catch accounting, using CMs and logbooks for data collection.
    - Observers collect haul-level gear, location, catch and genetic information.
    - Observer info would be more useful to evaluate EFP and permanent measures in the eventual gear rule (and salmon BiOp).
    - EM could be cheaper option for some participants.

- Limit on number of vessels OR strong industry co-op agreement to self-manage inseason

- Prevent a derby fishery and risk of exceeding Chinook bycatch limit.
    - Maximize value of EFP for data collection.
    - Would provide more certainty about potential impacts – **critical!**

# Impacts to non-salmon species

- NMFS will monitor bycatch of Chinook salmon, eulachon, and green sturgeon toward EFP limit and ITSs.
- Salmon Conservation Zones and a sub-limit in the Eureka Management Area would also limit bycatch of eulachon and Southern DPS green sturgeon.
- Don't think additional measures for eulachon and green sturgeon needed at this time.
- Asking for GMT analysis and recommendations regarding potential impacts to non-IFQ groundfish species.

# NMFS Recommendations

- Additional Recommendations
  - A prohibition on night fishing was used previously to reduce salmon bycatch in trawl fishery.
  - Splitting the limit by month or among individual vessels could spread effort throughout the year to ensure a more constantly supply to processors.
  - Implementation of salmon bycatch reduction devices or other gear modifications, such as limiting the height of the headrope (NMFS understands that some bottom trawl vessels may use salmon BRDs in Alaska to reduce salmon bycatch).
  - An alternate minimum mesh size (>2.5" and < 4.5"), implemented throughout the EFP or inseason, to reduce bycatch of eulachon while addressing industry's needs.
  - Test fishing when entering a new area or returning to an area after a period.

# Timeline

- Implement by February 1, 2017, but as soon as possible
  - Will be publishing a notice in Federal Register in early December to collect public comment for 30 days.
- Recommend against auto-renewal and instead schedule agenda item for September to review preliminary data and renew
  - September provides enough time for analysis and renewal for January 1, 2018