

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PRELIMINARY PREFERRED MANAGEMENT MEASURE ALTERNATIVES FOR 2019 AND 2020 FISHERIES

In March 2018, the Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) requested the Council consider revising the lingcod-to-salmon ratio in the salmon troll fishery north of 40°10' N. latitude ([Agenda Item, H.8.a., Supplemental SAS Report 1, March 2018](#)), potentially as an inseason item for implementation in 2018. Specifically, the SAS proposed increasing the amount of lingcod allowed in the salmon troll fishery from one lingcod to every 15 Chinook to one lingcod to every five Chinook. Based on input from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), this ratio would need to be analyzed as a new management measure through the groundfish biennial harvest specification and management measure process; therefore, it is not available for a routine inseason action in 2018.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) would like the Council to consider moving this management measure forward for public review through the 2019-2020 harvest specification and management measures process. WDFW makes this recommendation with the understanding that proposing this management measure at this point in the 2019-2020 biennial process may have analytical implications, and would welcome Council discussion on what may be feasible. We would note, however, that we would not expect there to be additional impacts to overfished rockfish, in particular, as we are proposing to keep the status quo trip limit of 10 lingcod per landing and the overall open access monthly trip limits in place.

New Information

Lingcod retention is currently allowed to accommodate incidental catch in the salmon troll fishery using a lingcod to Chinook salmon ratio that limits the incentive to target lingcod. The Council last analyzed this management measure in the [2009-2010 Groundfish Harvest Specification EIS](#). However, based on industry input, the current ratio does not adequately cover lingcod that is encountered and therefore vessels are forced to discard an economically valuable species. Additionally, under a climate of lower salmon quotas, limited lingcod would be able to be retained under the current ratio.

Groundfish Stock Status

At the time of the 2009-2010 analysis, the primary concern of the Council in allowing more liberal incidental limits was incentivizing lingcod targeting, thereby potentially increasing bycatch of canary and yelloweye rockfish. Table 1 below shows the optimum yield (OY)/annual catch limit (ACL) for each of the three species for 2009 and 2019.¹ In 2009, both canary and yelloweye rockfish were overfished with resulting OYs at 7 percent and 58.6 percent of 2019 proposed ACL levels respectively. Canary rockfish was declared rebuilt in 2015² and yelloweye rockfish is now

¹ ACLs replaced OYs in Amendment 23 in 2010 http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Am23_EA_Sept_14_2010_FINAL.pdf

² http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Canary_2016_Final.pdf

rebuilding at a depletion level of 28.4 percent³ and is expected to be rebuilt under any of the ACL alternatives within ten years. Lingcod north of 40° 10' N. lat. continues to be a healthy, underutilized stock.

Table 1: OY/ACLs for lingcod 40° 10' N. lat., canary rockfish, and yelloweye rockfish for 2009 and 2019

Stock	2009 OY	2019 ACL
Lingcod N of 40° 10' N. lat.	5,278	4,871
Canary Rockfish	105	1,450
Yelloweye Rockfish	17	29

a/ Under the preferred harvest control rule of $P^*=0.45$ for lingcod south of 42° N. lat.

b/ Under the no action alternative of $SPR=76$ percent. Alternative 1 ($SPR=70$ percent) and Alternative 2 ($SPR=65$ percent) have ACLs of 39 and 49 mt respectively.

Regulatory Changes

While Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) has been required for retaining groundfish since 2004⁴, additional fisheries are now required to use VMS (e.g., albacore tuna).⁵ Incidental retention of lingcod was likely limited in recent years due to the cost burden of installing VMS for just lingcod retention, but with the expansion of the requirement, there may be more vessels that will keep lingcod within the Rockfish Conservation Area.

Figure 1 below shows the number of vessels participating in salmon troll only, albacore troll only, and both fisheries within a given year from 2004-2017 off Washington. As shown, participation in all categories has varied throughout this time, likely due to fishing conditions and quotas. However, there are more vessels participating in both albacore troll and salmon troll fisheries in recent years compared to pre-2009 levels (i.e., when the incidental limits were implemented) and therefore incidental groundfish retention may increase on salmon troll trips.

³ https://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017_yelloweye_rebuilding_Final.pdf

⁴ http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/fishery_management/groundfish/vms-sb-compliance.pdf

⁵ http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/fishery_management/hms_program/complianceguide_vessel_monitoringsystem.pdf

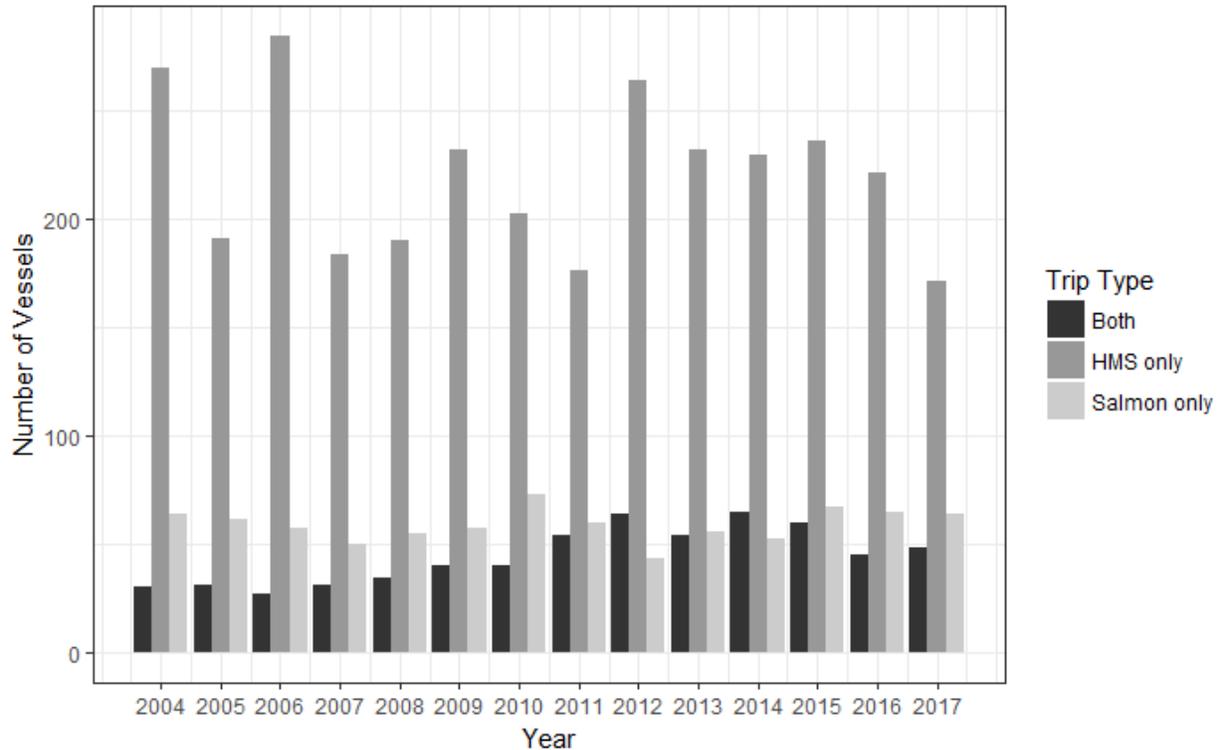


Figure 1: Number of vessels by troll trip type off Washington, 2004-2017

Updated Analysis from 2009-2010

WDFW assessed the original analysis from the 2009-2010 biennium and updated it with new landings, effort, and more recent bycatch data. At the time, there was only limited observer information from WDFW on commercial salmon troll boats from the 2003-2005 fishing seasons. Two years of additional data (2006 and 2007) were obtained and used in this preliminary analysis. WDFW does recognize that this continues to be a limited data set and that the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) does not observe the salmon troll fisheries within their incidental open access observations. However, it does provide a sense of the likelihood of encountering yelloweye when lingcod are incidentally caught.

From 2003-2007, 229 commercial salmon troll trips were observed by WDFW, which is approximately 7.7 percent of the total number of salmon troll trips over the same time period off Washington. On those observed trips, only 64 were positive for lingcod (27.9 percent) and 13 were positive for yelloweye (5.8 percent). On those trips positive for lingcod, the observed yelloweye bycatch rate was 0.05 pounds of yelloweye per pound of lingcod. If the Council moves forward with this proposal, WDFW can assist in further analyzing projected impacts for June.

Risk to Yelloweye Rockfish

Although this proposal pertains primarily to lingcod, there are possible implications to yelloweye rockfish if fishing behavior changes from simply retaining incidentally caught lingcod to searching out lingcod in new areas where yelloweye rockfish might be more prevalent. However, based on the preliminary analysis, the encounter rate of yelloweye rockfish on salmon troll trips appears to be limited. Additionally, this management measure is to allow salmon troll vessels to retain

lingcod that are incidentally caught. Assuming that behavior does not change (i.e. no targeting occurs), the risk to yelloweye remains low.

Needs of fishing communities

Salmon troll fisheries have been on the decline in recent years, and opportunities for upcoming years are projected to remain poor. By increasing the amount of lingcod that can be taken in the salmon troll fishery, the Council could provide additional economic benefits to the fleet and local communities. With the Council contemplating yelloweye rockfish ACLs that are higher than have been in place in many years, even some additional yelloweye impacts as a result of this measure would likely not outweigh the economic benefits to the salmon troll fleet.

Given that canary rockfish is rebuilt, the 2017 yelloweye rockfish stock assessment paints a more optimistic picture toward rebuilding, and there is a healthy, underutilized lingcod stock north of 40° 10' N. lat., we think there is room to consider this management measure in the 2019-2020 biennial process. Particularly, this may provide some relief to salmon troll fishers. Therefore, we recommend this measure be forwarded for public review.