

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON BIENNIAL HARVEST
SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES PROCESS FOR 2021-2022
FISHERIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received a briefing from John DeVore and Todd Phillips, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, and Karen Palmigiano, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), reviewed the proposed schedule in [Agenda Item I.6, Attachment 1](#), and offers the following comments.

Schedule

The GMT notes that the most successful and complete biennial harvest specifications and management measure cycles (such as 2019-20) adhered to a front-loaded schedule as described in [Council Operating Procedure \(COP\) 9](#). Success, defined as January 1 implementation, depends on all participants in the process following this schedule. The GMT notes the importance of completing the harvest specifications decisions as outlined in [Attachment 1](#) by the November 2019 meeting. This will help facilitate the development of the GMT's winter analysis, which is necessary for final Council action on the annual catch limits (ACLs) in April 2020 and management measures in June 2020.

As described below, if the Council focuses the regulatory package on harvest specification numbers and those measures (i.e. commercial and recreational harvest limits) needed to implement those harvest specifications, achievement of schedule goals could allow the Council to simply review, clean up, and finalize management measures in June as opposed to having to review new analyses. The GMT envisions a narrowly focused biennial process going hand-in-hand with the Council's new process for groundfish workload prioritization. A streamlined biennial process, together with the new groundfish workload prioritization process, will create efficiencies that should help the Council and advisory bodies consider and implement groundfish management priorities outside of the biennial process more efficiently.

Additionally, the GMT emphasizes the importance of exempted fishing permit (EFP) actions taking place in accordance with the schedules described in [COP-19](#), particularly those that request deductions from the annual catch limit (ACL), so that anticipated impacts (i.e., set-asides) and analysis align with the biennial process. EFP applications should include all the information necessary for evaluation in November of odd-numbered years in order to be considered for final action in June of even-numbered years, to align with the biennial process.

Management Measures

Based on guidance from NMFS, management measures considered in the biennial process should focus on those that are necessary for the implementation of the harvest specifications (e.g., commercial trip limits, bag limits, and minimal rockfish conservation area adjustments), rather than general improvements to the fishery (e.g., Oregon long-leader gear action and Emley/Platt EFP). These broader improvements and solutions to emerging issues should be examined outside the biennial process, and prioritized as part of the groundfish workload prioritization process.

Potential Management Measures Identified to Date

The proposed schedule for the 2021-22 harvest specifications and management measures process calls for the Council to adopt a preliminary range of proposed management measures at the September meeting. The GMT has already received informal requests to explore the actions listed below as part of the 2021-22 process and will provide additional information on these topics at a later meeting.

- Consideration of annual catch targets for shortbelly rockfish and sablefish
- Consideration of a blackgill rockfish harvest guideline
- Classification of additional stocks as ecosystem component species (e.g., shortbelly rockfish)
- Switch allocations for slope rockfish south of 40° 10' N. lat. from an Amendment 21 allocation to biennial allocation
- Consideration of trip limit requests north and south of 40° 10' N. lat. (see Appendix 1 for a list of preliminary trip limit requests)

The GMT also received a request to consider modifications to the seaward boundary of the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA). Under workload planning at the March 2019 Council meeting, NMFS recommended the Council add a standalone agenda item for non-trawl RCA adjustments ([Agenda item C.5.a, Supplemental NMFS Report 1, March 2019](#)). NMFS suggested this agenda item include: 1) Western Cowcod Conservation Area adjustments; 2) non-trawl RCA modifications (Item 6 in [Agenda Item G.4.a, GMT Report 1, March 2019](#)); and 3) non-trawl logbooks. The GMT was under the impression that the Council would schedule a standalone agenda item for non-trawl RCA (currently prioritized under the Groundfish Workload Prioritization list, but not yet scheduled) for the June 2020 meeting so that RCA changes could be implemented in early 2021. After further discussion, the GMT recommends that the non-trawl RCA agenda be pushed ahead to March 2020 instead of June in order for the final rule to occur more in line with the start of 2021.

Harvest Specifications

In September, the Council will adopt final preferred alternative overfishing levels and a range of preliminary preferred alternative for P*s, acceptable biological catches, and ACLs. Given the action taken by the Council under Agenda Item D.5, the GMT, with assistance from Council and NMFS staff, will scope the alternative approaches, criteria, frequency, additional process steps, and potential species (e.g., Oregon black rockfish) for consideration by the Council in September. Additionally, the GMT has had preliminary discussions on increasing P*s within the current available range for shortspine and longspine thornyheads and sablefish (e.g., from 0.4 to 0.45) and will provide further information in September.

Appendix 1. List of requested trip limit changes, as of June 2019

- *North of 40° 10' N. lat.:*
 - Increase open access (OA) lingcod trip limits to 1 mt per month
 - Increase canary rockfish trip limits - TBD
 - Increase thornyhead trip limits - TBD
 - Increase shelf rockfish trip limits, but create a separate trip limit for widow rockfish
 - Increase slope rockfish and darkblotched rockfish trip limits
 - Increase yellowtail rockfish trip limits for salmon troll
 - Resolve misleading federal references, such as cabezon trip limit being “unlimited” in the federal trip limit table but has a lower state trip limit in Oregon and California
- *South of 40° 10' N. lat.:*
 - Allow retention of thornyhead by the OA fishery from 34° 27' N. lat. to 40° 10' N. lat.
 - Increase limited entry trip limits for canary rockfish
 - Open Period 2 south of 34° 27' N. lat. to allow retention of California scorpionfish
 - Reconfigure shelf rockfish and cabezon trip limits, as applicable within the scope of actions [described in public comment under [Agenda Item I.6.b](#)]

PFMC
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