

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT 2 ON WORKLOAD & NEW MANAGEMENT MEASURES UPDATE

In June 2019, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) approved further scoping of two new groundfish management measures: conversion factors for landing dressed fish and the vessel monitoring system ping rate for salmon troll vessels. The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) provides information on those two items below. Following the June 2019 Council meeting, additional requests were presented to the GMT for consideration as new workload priorities. Those issues are appropriately reviewed under this agenda item, to allow the Council to consider them in tandem with existing groundfish priorities.

The GMT notes that our current workload is reflected in [Agenda Item H.2.a, GMT Report 1](#) Table 1. The GMT is fully subscribed with the items on the schedule in Table 2 over the next year and does not have the capacity to take on additional analysis without removing items currently under development. The items listed in Table 3 are currently of interest to the Council but not yet prioritized. Under the new groundfish workload prioritization process, the Council will consider which items, including new items and those listed in Table 2, to identify as “priorities” and which items will be added to the Year-at-a-Glance and be further developed by GMT, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Council staff for Council prioritization at its March (or April) meeting each year.

Conversion Factors for Landings of Dressed Fish

Conversion factors are used to convert the weight of dressed fish to whole round pounds. For limited entry fixed gear (LEFG) and open access (OA), the Federal conversion factors are those set by the states, and may be subject to change by the states. For the individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery, the Federal conversion factors are listed explicitly in regulation [50 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 660.60 \(h\)\(5\)\(ii\)\(B\)\(2\)\(i\) through \(iii\)](#) and are currently the same as those used by the states and for LEFG and OA. Nearly all of the conversion factors used in state and Federal management are based on the [Recoveries and Yields from Pacific Fish and Shellfish](#) study and are available in an [online database](#). This study contains many more conversion types than are used in state and Federal regulation (e.g., 23 types for sablefish alone), and industry has requested new conversion factors from this study be added to regulation so they can deliver new product forms to niche markets.

To add new conversion factors: (1) each state adds the desired conversion factor from the “Recoveries and Yields” study into state regulations; (2) the new state conversion factors then become effective for Federal trip limit and quota management for LEFG and OA; and (3) for the IFQ fishery, Federal regulations must be amended to add the new conversion factors to the current list. NMFS is evaluating if a more streamlined process can be developed. While Oregon and Washington state processes allow for rapid adoption of new conversion factors into state regulations, some conversion factors in California are in statute, and adjustments would require legislative action. The Council has previously stated their desire that the same conversion factors be used throughout the entire West Coast, but may have to consider state-specific conversion factors if complications arise due to different state processes.

Relevant Factors for Analysis

Little additional analysis is needed, since all the new desired conversion factors have already been researched in the “Recoveries and Yields” study.

Potential Impacts

Uncertain economic benefits, depending on interest from market and buyers for new product forms.

Workload

Workload will be minimal for the GMT and low for Federal regulators if changes to conversion factors are made for the OA sector in Washington and Oregon. However, if the Council is interested in changes to conversion factors for the IFQ fishery, modifying state regulations in California will require moderate to substantial workload. Hence, workload will largely depend on whether the new conversion factor(s) are implemented coastwide or at the state level.

This proposal is already on the GMT’s list of new items in [Agenda Item H.2.a, GMT Report 1 Table 3](#). **The GMT recommends that the Council consider the benefits of this item relative to the benefits of other unprioritized items and ongoing workload, if it wishes to prioritize this item on the Year-at-a-Glance as a standalone item at this time.**

Salmon Troll Requests

Vessel Monitoring System Ping Rate

A Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is required when taking, retaining, or possessing groundfish in Federal waters when using OA gears, such as troll (§660.14). A segment of the salmon troll fleet also retains groundfish and are a primary group impacted by this regulation. The main purpose of the VMS is to allow the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) to track vessel activity in and near closed areas. The current minimum ping rate is once per hour, but the Council took action in April 2016 to raise the minimum ping rate to four times per hour. This action is currently pending implementation by NMFS.

In April 2019, NMFS informed the Council that they could reconsider minimum ping rates for troll gear at a future Council meeting ([Agenda Item G.7.a, NMFS Report 1, April 2019](#)). Salmon trollers support returning to a minimum ping rate of one per hour, because this reduction could result in cost savings that could help ensure the profitability of the fishery.

Relevant Factors for Analysis

The GMT understands that more cost-effective VMS systems are being developed that automatically increase ping rates as vessels approach closed areas, but defers to NMFS OLE as the subject matter experts on this issue. A potential increase in ping rates could be reconsidered in the future as this new technology becomes available to the fleet.

Potential Impacts

As described above, this change would impact only the troll fishery ([Agenda Item G.7.a, NMFS Report 1, April 2019](#)). Specifically, the cost reduction from four pings (~\$105) to one ping (~\$50) would result in \$55 cost savings per month, or approximately annual fleetwide savings from the

troll fleet of \$90,000 (assuming a participation level similar to the 139 salmon troll vessels in 2018).

Workload

Low for the GMT.

The GMT recommends the Council include this item on the list subject to Enforcement Consultants' recommendation.

Groundfish Retention in the Salmon Troll Fishery

The GMT received two proposals that pertain to retention of groundfish in the salmon troll fishery. Under the current regulations, salmon trollers are allowed to catch the OA trip limits of groundfish throughout the entire coast, but only when fishing outside of the non-trawl rockfish conservation area (RCA) and abiding by other Federal regulations (e.g., VMS). However, [Table 3 North to subpart 660](#) provides an exemption for trollers to retain lingcod and yellowtail rockfish while fishing in the non-trawl RCA, but only when fishing north of 40° 10' N. lat. The lingcod and yellowtail rockfish limits for salmon trollers are lower than the OA limits and are based on ratios to landed salmon.

North of 40° 10' N. lat.

The first proposal, from Steve Wilson, is a request to increase the yellowtail rockfish trip limits for the salmon troll fishery north of 40° 10' N. lat., both inside and outside the non-trawl RCA. Currently, salmon trollers are allowed to retain one pound of yellowtail rockfish per two pounds of salmon, up to a limit of 200 pound/month both inside and outside the non-trawl RCA. After discussions with NMFS, **the GMT recommends that this proposal be considered along with other trip limit proposals via the 2021-2022 harvest specifications and management measures.** The specifics of this proposal will be provided in the GMT's supplemental report on agenda item H.8.

South of 40° 10' N. lat.

The second proposal was made by John Koeppen and the Salmon Advisory Sub-panel (SAS) and is a request to allow retention of incidental catches of mid-water rockfishes (i.e., yellowtail, vermilion, canary, widow, and bocaccio) in the non-trawl RCA throughout the entire coast, but with a focus south of 40° 10' N. lat. The objective of this proposal is to allow trollers to be able to retain and sell their incidental catches of rockfishes instead of being required to discard them, which is potentially wasteful, as fishers report that most discarded mid-water rockfish do not survive.

NMFS and the GMT determined that this proposal would require more in-depth analysis than the yellowtail rockfish proposal, because it pertains to allowing retention of groundfish in an area where it has been prohibited for some time. The GMT notes that the scope of this proposal could be considered under the Amendment 3 Non-Trawl RCA Modification package that is currently prioritized and scheduled on the Year-at-a-Glance calendar ([Agenda Item C.5, Attachment 1, September 2019](#)) to begin in March 2020. If the Council wants to consider this issue separately, the item would need to be added to the list of groundfish management measures workload list and be prioritized as a stand-alone agenda item.

Relevant Factors for Analysis

- Why were the restrictions south of 40° 10' N. lat. originally put in place?
- Why were the species allowed for retention north of 40° 10' N. lat. restricted to lingcod and yellowtail rockfish?
- How will this request interact with consideration of potential changes to the non-trawl RCA currently scheduled on the Year-at-a-Glance?
- How do we discourage targeting of mid-water rockfishes to prevent mortality from increasing?

Potential Impacts

Salmon trollers report greater interactions with increasingly abundant rockfish species. Allowing retention of incidental catches could reduce waste, increase revenue, and not increase mortality, as long as limits ensure targeting will not occur.

Workload

Medium workload for the GMT, because limited data are available for analysis.

The GMT recommends this item not be scheduled as a standalone item, as this issue could be addressed through the non-trawl RCA changes currently scheduled on the Year-At-A-Glance for potential consideration in March 2020.

Public Comment

Dave Kosta EFP request ([Agenda Item H.2.b, Public Comment](#))

Based on discussions with the NMFS, the GMT determined that extending the current Emley/Platt exempted fishing permit (EFP) into Oregon would not be possible at this time, as impacts for this EFP have only been evaluated for California, where the EFP currently takes place. For 2021-2022, this individual could request to join the Emley/Platt EFP with a geographic extension to Oregon, or submit his own EFP application; both would require an impact analysis for Oregon and potentially off the top deductions for north of 40° 10' N. lat. Applications for EFPs for the 2021-2022 biennial cycle must be submitted before the advanced briefing book deadline for November (approximately October 15th) and must abide by [Council Operating Procedure 19](#) and Federal regulations at §600.725.

Bill James request ([Agenda Item B.1.b, Public Comment](#))

This request was submitted under B.1 but is more appropriate under this agenda item and therefore the GMT discusses it here. This concern will likely be addressed in the impacts analysis for potential changes to the non-trawl RCA modification package, currently scheduled for the March 2020 meeting on the Year-at-a-Glance.

Marc Schmidt request ([Agenda Item B.1.b, Public Comment](#))

This request was submitted under B.1 but is more appropriate under this agenda item. The request can also be addressed in the potential changes to the non-trawl RCA modification package currently scheduled for March 2020 on the Year-at-a-Glance.

Recommendations

The GMT recommends the Council:

- **consider the benefits of the conversion factors item relative to the benefits of other unprioritized items and ongoing workload, if it wishes to prioritize this item on the Year-at-a-Glance as a standalone item at this time;**
- **add the salmon troll vessel ping rate to the groundfish workload list, prioritized subject to Enforcement Consultants' recommendation;**
- **consider increasing groundfish retention in the salmon troll fishery north of 40° 10' N. lat. along with other trip limit proposals via the 2021-2022 harvest specifications and management measures; and**
- **consider addressing groundfish retention in the salmon troll fishery south of 40° 10' N. lat. as part of the non-trawl RCA changes currently scheduled for potential consideration in March 2020.**

PFMC

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