GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON FINAL ACTION ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS – INCLUDING FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON EXPEMPTED FISHING PERMITS FOR 2020

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the briefing book materials and progress of the groundfish fisheries to date, received an overview from Mr. Todd Phillips of Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, and offer the following updates and recommendations.

Action items

Sablefish Daily-Trip-Limit

Table 1 shows the projected Daily-Trip-Limit (DTL) landings and percent attainment, which incorporates landings and associated price data through September 14, 2019. Attainments have been relatively low for all four DTL sectors in 2019 compared to past years and pre-season projections. The Groundfish Advisory Sub-panel (GAP) reports that the earlier in-season trip limit increase (an increase of 200 lbs weekly, effective August 2, 2019) in the open access (OA) DTL fishery north of 36° North latitude (N. lat.) has benefited individuals, but depressed prices continue to contribute to low sector attainments.

Table 1. Projected landings, landing target, and percent attainment by DTL sector. (LEN= Limited Entry Fixed Gear North of 36° N. lat., OAN= Open Access North of 36° N. lat., LES= Limited Entry Fixed Gear South of 36° N. lat., OAS= Open Access South of 36° N. lat.)

Sector	Projected Landings (rd. wt. mt)	Landing Target (mt)	Attainment (%)
LEN	190-213	273	70-78
OAN	340-420	449	75-93
LES	221-253	788	28-32
OAS	17-21	338	17-21

Based on these projected landings and conversations with the GAP, the GMT developed in-season trip limit alternatives (Table 2) for Council consideration for the limited entry (LE) fishery north (LEN) and OA fishery north (OAN) of 36° N. lat.

Table 2. Sablefish trip limit alternatives for LEN and OAN.

Sector	Alternative	Trip Limit
LEN	SQ	1,300 lb/week, not to exceed 3,900 lb/2 months
	1	1,500 lb/week, not to exceed 4,500 lb/2 months
	2	1,700 lb/week, not to exceed 5,100 lb/2 months
OAN	SQ	300 lb/day, or one landing per week up to 1,400 lb, not to exceed 2,800 lb/2 months
	1	300 lb/day, or one landing per week up to 1,500 lb, not to exceed 3,000 lb/2 months

Table 3 shows the projected landings and percent attainment for LEN and OAN, assuming a mid-October implementation of higher trip limits. Potential attainment maximums are slightly greater than landing targets, but the DTL model has consistently over-estimated landings in 2019. Given this known bias, actual landings are likely to result in attainments below the landing targets under the proposed trip limits.

Table 3. Projected landings and percent attainment for the LEN and OAN trip limit alternatives assuming mid-October implementation.

Sector	Alt.	Projected Landings (rd. wt. mt)	Landing Target (mt)	Attainment (%)
LEN	SQ	190-213	273	70-78
	1	217-246		79-90
	2	247-283		90-104
OAN	SQ	340-420	449	75-93
	1	360-460		81-102

Based on these estimates, the GMT recommends Alternative 2 for LEN (1,700 lb/ week, not to exceed 5,100 lb/2 months) and Alternative 1 for OAN (300 lb/day, or one landing per week up to 1,500 lb, not to exceed 3,000 lb/2 months). We project that these alternatives would result in an additional $508-thousand in ex-vessel revenue for fishermen and, $1.04-million in income and 16 jobs when factoring in overall economic benefits to fishermen, processors, and fishing support businesses.

Exempted Fishing Permits

Midwater Trawl

The GMT sees merit in the extension of the Trawl Gear Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), as the participants continue to collect data on salmon impacts from the re-emerging midwater trawl rockfish fishery. Additionally, this EFP helps fulfill the requirements of the 2017 Salmon incidental take statement (ITS), which requires three years of an EFP before additional trawl effort

can be re-introduced south of 42° N. lat. The 2019 trawl gear EFP fulfills year 2 of this three-year requirement, and 2020 would provide the final year necessary to meet the ITS requirement.

Electronic Monitoring EFP

The GMT received a concise update from Ms. Melissa Hooper and Mr. Justin Kavanuagh, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff, on potential changes to the Electronic Monitoring (EM) EFP in 2020. Vessels requested the ability to discard rex sole, which cannot be accurately identified during the EM video review and may be misreported as Dover sole. This could artificially inflate mortality estimates for Dover sole, but the low Dover sole attainment makes it unlikely to result in an exceeded harvest specification. Nonetheless, the GMT has concerns with this practice for a number of reasons.

First, the GMT has included the following photos to provide some context around our comments (Figure 1 and Figure 2). While these are both flatfish, their differing size and shape should make them identifiable on camera. Lighting, glare, and other issues preventing the distinguishing of Dover sole and rex sole could also cause difficulties in identification of other flatfish, such as Pacific halibut or petrale sole. Second, accounting for rex sole as Dover sole differs from other practices allowing for discard of mixed species. Specifically, mix of deepsea sole and Dover sole can currently be discarded, with all mortality accounted for as Dover sole. The same is true of mixes of Pacific and unidentified sanddab, which is accounted for as Pacific sanddab. These two examples do not cause concern, because Pacific sanddab and unidentified sanddab are both managed under the Other Flatfish grouping and deepsea sole is a non-FMP species. In both cases, this allows for conservative estimations of mortality and quota of those species and groupings within the FMP. In comparison, Dover sole is its own management grouping and a quota species, while rex sole is in the other flatfish grouping. Combining these two would cause confusion for quota management and mortality estimation. Based on this information**, the GMT recommends the EM EFP participants consider improved lighting and/or handling practices as opposed to altering the EFP to allow vessels to discard rex sole as Dover sole.**

Figure 1 . Photo of a Dover sole (source: ODFW).

Figure 2 . Photo of a rex sole (source: ODFW).

Informational Items

At-Sea Bycatch

During the inseason agenda item in June 2019, the GMT reported that the at-sea whiting sectors (motherships and catcher-processors) had taken a combined 311.2 mt of yellowtail rockfish north of 40° 10′ N. lat., which exceeds their 300 mt set aside. The GMT also determined there is not a risk to either the annual catch limit (ACL) or the trawl allocation at that time, as there were ~2,500 mt and 1,000 mt, respectively, of unutilized allocation in 2018. At-sea bycatch of yellowtail rockfish has only increased by 6 mt since June, so the GMT does not propose any action at this time.

As of September 15, 2019, the at-sea mothership sector exceeded their 15 mt set-aside of darkblotched rockfish by 0.5 mt. The GMT does not identify this as a conservation concern, because darkblotched rockfish attainment in the individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery continues to be low, at around 40 percent per year and only at 200.1 mt of 658 mt of the total IFQ allocation in 2019.

Vermilion Rockfish in Southern Shelf Complex

The GMT received a personal communication from a stakeholder stating there is concern about high vermilion rockfish catch off California. Vermilion rockfish are managed within the southern shelf complex (south of 40° 10′ N. lat.), which has an ACL of 1,545.9 mt. The 2018 total mortality of 344.9 mt for vermilion rockfish exceeded the ACL contribution to the complex ACL of 224.6 mt for both 2019 and 2020. In the 2021-22 management period, the vermilion rockfish ACL is 209.5 mt of the southern shelf complex ACL of 224.6 mt for 2019 and 2020. The GMT understands that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife plans to address this concern in the 2021-2022 biennial harvest specifications and management measures.

Nearshore Rockfish Complex North of 40° 10′ N lat.

The GMT was informed that the Oregon recreational fishery is projected to exceed its state-specified recreational harvest guideline. Beginning in early August 2019, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) requested that anglers voluntarily avoid China, copper, and quillback rockfish, the three species that comprise approximately 98-99 percent of harvest from this complex. However, initial recreational angler survey interview data from the first two statistical weeks of August showed that China, copper, and quillback rockfish catch remained high.

Therefore, ODFW prohibited retention of those three species beginning on August 23. Impacts from the Oregon commercial nearshore fishery are also on track to reach the state-specified commercial harvest guideline. The projected recreational and commercial fishery mortality indicate total impacts would be above the Oregon share of the nearshore rockfish complex north of 40° 10′ N. lat. ACL. However, based on the projected impacts for other fisheries (Table 4), the coastwide ACL is not expected to be exceeded, so no action is necessary in other fisheries. For additional context, Table 5 shows the ACL and total mortality for the complex over the last five years.

Table 4 . 2019 estimated projected total impacts and catch limits by sector for the nearshore rockfish complex north of 40° 10′ N lat.

Sector	Projected Impacts (mt)	Harvestable Amount [b/] (mt)	Difference (mt)
WA Recreational	12.0	19.4	-7.4
OR Recreational [a/]	16.0	11.7	4.3
OR Commercial [a/]	11.9	12.3	-0.4
CA Recreational	21.0	38.0	-9.2
CA Commercial	7.8		
Total	**68.7**	**81.5**	**-12.8**

a/ Starting in 2019 in Oregon, blue/deacon rockfish are not part of the nearshore rockfish complex
b/ Managed with various state and federal allocation types designed to not exceed the complex ACL

Table 5 . Annual catch limits (mt) and total mortality (in mt and percent) of the nearshore rockfish complex north of 40° 10′ N lat.

Year	ACL (mt)	Total Mortality (mt)	Total Mortality (%)
2014	94	55	58.5%
2015	69	65	94.2%
2016	69	58	84.1%
2017	105	91	86.7%
2018	105	80	76.2%
2019	82	N/A	N/A

Cabezon in the Oregon Recreational Fishery

The GMT was informed by ODFW that retention of cabezon by boat-based anglers in the Oregon recreational fishery was prohibited beginning on Friday, August 16. Retention by shore-based anglers is still allowed, as that component of the fishery has low impacts that are accounted for pre-season. ODFW staff reviewed preliminary data from July and raw interviews for the first two statistical weeks of August, and they determined the retention prohibition was necessary to prevent exceeding the Oregon recreational state-specified harvest guideline and limit the potential to exceed the Oregon ACL in combination with commercial impacts.

Rebuilding Species Scorecard

The GMT updated the overfished species scorecard to reflect current catch projections for cowcod and yelloweye rockfish (Attachment 1). This attachment also provides updates to off-the top deductions and recreational sectors. The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) has completed their stock assessment survey work in Area 2A for 2019, resulting in total yelloweye rockfish impacts of 0.7 mt, which is 0.4 mt below the 1.1 mt IPHC share of the research set-aside.

Bycatch values for cowcod have been updated to reflect previous years' take in the trawl and non-trawl sectors as documented in the Groundfish Mortality report. These new data support that these sectors are within their allocation amounts. Updated catch projections for the California recreational fishery reflecting 2.2 mt, which is 0.6 mt above the original projected amount, have been included. The total cowcod ACT is currently 60.2 percent attained and is not projected to be reached by the end of the year.

Chinook Salmon Scorecard

Table 6 shows the inseason bycatch estimates through September 16, 2019 and sector thresholds as stipulated in the 2017 incidental take statement for Chinook salmon in the groundfish fisheries. The GMT projects that the whiting and non-whiting thresholds are unlikely to be reached or exceeded by the end of the calendar year, based on the relatively low bycatch rates and amounts to date.

Table 6 . Inseason bycatch estimates by sector and threshold for Chinook salmon (number of fish) through September 16, 2019.

Sector	Sub-Sector	Catch To Date	Threshold	% of Threshold
Whiting	CP	347	11,000	12.4%
	MS	200		
	Shoreside	801		
	Tribal	13		
	Total	1,361		
Non-Whiting	Bottom Trawl	98	5,500	11.6%
	Midwater Trawl	38		
	Fixed Gear	500 a/		
	WA Rec			
	OR Rec + longleader			
	CA Rec			
	Total	636		
All groundfish fisheries		1,997	20,000	10.0%

a/ GMT proposed assumption of mortality, which assumed maximum historical mortality (154) plus a 250 fish buffer from the 2017 BiOp and an additional 96 fish to account for some uncertainty in recreational salmon seasons; recreational estimates only applies to groundfish fisheries occurring outside of salmon seasons

Coho Salmon Bycatch in the Shoreside Whiting Fisheries

Industry alerted the GMT that 158 coho salmon had been taken in the shoreside whiting fishery, which is managed under a 474 threshold that will trigger re-consultation if exceeded in any one calendar year. The GMT will monitor the situation, but believes there is minimal risk to the

whiting sector's coho salmon threshold, because the shoreside whiting cooperative issued an alert on August 29 to voluntarily avoid coho salmon. Further, at-sea bycatch consists of less than 20 individual coho salmon, although the precise number is currently confidential due to less than 3 vessels encountering coho salmon so far in 2019.

The GMT recommends that:

- **the Council adopt Alternative 2 for LEN (1,700 lb/ week, not to exceed 5,100 lb/2 months) and Alternative 1 for OAN (300 lb/day, or one landing per week up to 1,500 lb, not to exceed 3,000 lb/2 months) and**
- **EM EFP participants consider improved lighting and/or handling practices as opposed to altering the EFP to allow vessels to discard rex sole.**

Attachment 1. Allocations[a] and projected mortality impacts (mt) of rebuilding groundfish species for 2019.

Fishery	Cowcod b/		Yelloweye		
***Date*: August 27, 2019**	**Allocations a/**	**Projected Impacts**	**HG Allocations a/**	**ACT Allocations a/**	**Projected Impacts**
Off the Top Deductions	2.0	2.0	6.1	6.1	5.9
EFP b/	0.00	0.00	0.24	0.24	0.02
Research c/	2.0	2.0	2.9	2.9	**2.3**
Incidental OA d/	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.6	1.3
Tribal e/			2.3	2.3	2.3
Bottom Trawl					0.0
Troll					0.0
Fixed gear			2.3	2.3	2.3
mid-water					0.0
whiting					
Trawl Allocations	2.2	0.4	3.4		0.1
-SB Trawl	2.2	**0.4**	3.4		0.1
-At-Sea Trawl			0.0		0.0
a) At-sea whiting MS					
b) At-sea whiting CP					
Non-Trawl Allocation	3.8	3.2	38.6	30.3	15.8
Non-Nearshore		1.0	2.0	1.6	0.8
LE FG					0.7
OA FG		**1.0**			0.1
Directed OA: Nearshore		0.0	6.0	4.7	2.1
Recreational Groundfish					
WA			10.0	7.8	5.2
OR			8.9	7.0	**4.4**
CA		2.2	11.6	9.1	**3.3**
TOTAL	6.0	3.6	48.1	36.4	21.8
Harvest Specification	**6.0**	**6.0**	**48**	**39**	39
Difference	0.0	2.4	-0.1	2.6	17.2
Percent of ACL	100.0%	60.2%	100.2%	93.3%	56.0%
Key			= not applicable		
	--		= trace, less than 0.1 mt		
			= Fixed Values		
			= off the top deductions		

a/ Formal allocations are represented in the black shaded cells and are specified in regulation in Tables 1b and 1e. The other values in the allocation columns are 1) off the top deductions, 2) set asides from the trawl allocation 3) ad-hoc allocations recommended in the 2019-2020 EIS process, 4) HG for the recreational fisheries for yelloweye rockfish.

b/ EFPs are amounts set aside to accommodate anticipated applications. Values in this table represent the estimates provided by the applicants and approved by the Council, which are currently specified in regulation.

c/ Includes NMFS trawl shelf-slope surveys, the IPHC halibut survey, and expected impacts from SRPs and LOAs.

d/ The GMT's best estimate of impacts as analyzed in the 2019-2020 Environmental Impact Statement (Appendix B), which are currently specified in regulation.

e/ Tribal values in the allocation column represent the the values in regulation. Projected impacts are the tribes best estimate of catch.