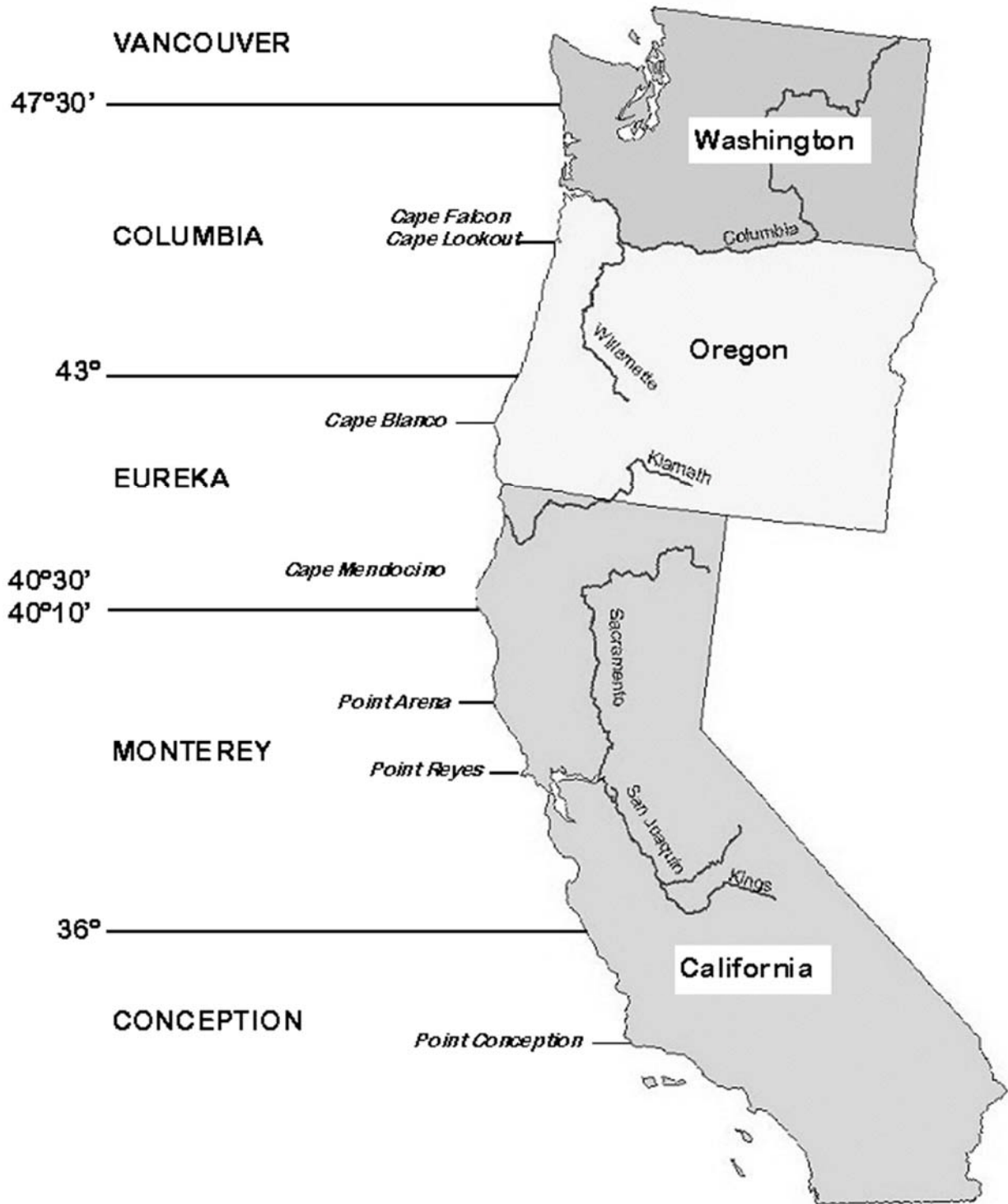




FACT SHEET: GEOGRAPHY OF ROCKFISH



FACT SHEET: GROUND FISH

THE FISH

The groundfish covered by the Council's groundfish fishery management plan (FMP) include over 100 different species that, with a few exceptions, live on or near the bottom of the ocean. These are made up of the following species:

- **Rockfish.** The plan covers over 64 different species of rockfish, including widow, yellowtail, canary, chilipepper, yelloweye, and vermilion rockfish; bocaccio, cowcod, thornyheads, and Pacific ocean perch.
- **Flatfish.** The plan covers 12 species of flatfish, including petrale sole, Dover sole, starry flounder, arrowtooth flounder, and Pacific sanddab.
- **Roundfish.** The six species of roundfish included in the FMP are lingcod, cabezon, kelp greenling, Pacific cod, Pacific whiting (hake), and sablefish.
- **Sharks and skates.** All endemic skates are managed in the FMP, although all species except longnose skate are designated Ecosystem Component species that are not actively managed with annual catch limits (there is a monitoring requirement to ensure harvest is not appreciably increasing). The shark species managed in the FMP are leopard shark, soupfin shark, and spiny dogfish.
- **Other species.** These include ratfish, finescale codling, and all endemic grenadier species.

THE FISHERY AND GEAR

Since there is such a wide variety of groundfish, many different gear types are used to target them. While the trawl fishery harvests most groundfish, they can also be caught with troll, longline, hook and line, pots, gillnets, and other gear. The West Coast groundfish fishery described in the FMP has five sectors:

- **Limited entry trawl.** This sector is comprised of fishermen with limited entry permits endorsed for trawl gear, including bottom and pelagic trawls. The limited entry program limits the number of vessels allowed to participate in a fishery. This sector is rationalized in a system of individual fishing quotas and harvest cooperatives.
- **Limited entry fixed gear.** This sector is comprised of fishermen with limited entry permits endorsed for line or

pot/trap gears. Those limited entry fixed gear permits with a sablefish endorsement are able to target sablefish during the primary season (April through October) to catch individual vessel limits (termed tier limits) of sablefish. While sablefish is the primary target species in this sector, limited entry fixed gear fishers also target other groundfish species such as rockfish.

- **Open access.** This sector of the groundfish fishery is comprised of fishermen targeting groundfish without limited entry permits, and fishermen who participate in non-groundfish fisheries that incidentally catch groundfish. Trawl gear may not be used in the directed groundfish open access fishery. Trawl gears for target species such as pink shrimp, California halibut, ridgeback prawns, and sea cucumbers are exempted from this rule.
- **Recreational.** This sector includes anglers targeting groundfish species and others who target non-groundfish species but who incidentally take groundfish under recreational gears and regulations. The West Coast recreational fisheries are managed by the coastal states with management coordinated in the Council process.
- **Tribal.** This sector is made up of tribal commercial fishers who have a federally recognized treaty right to fish for federally managed groundfish in their "usual and accustomed" fishing areas. These tribes, all located in Washington state, include the Quinault, Hoh, Quileute, and Makah. Formal allocations to these tribes exist for sablefish and Pacific whiting. Other groundfish species allocations for this sector are decided in the Council biennial management process.

FACT SHEET: GROUND FISH

THE MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

Groundfish are managed through a number of measures including harvest guidelines, quotas, trip and landing limits, area restrictions, seasonal closures, and gear restrictions (such as minimum mesh size for nets and small trawl footprint requirements for trawling shoreward of the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCAs are areas where fishing is prohibited to specific gears or sectors)). All sectors of the groundfish fishery are currently constrained by the need to rebuild groundfish species that have been declared overfished (cowcod, Pacific ocean perch, and yelloweye rockfish). Rebuilding plans have been developed to help these species recover. Because of the low available harvest of species managed under rebuilding plans, the overall groundfish harvest has been significantly reduced.

The Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan contains the rules for managing the groundfish fishery. It outlines the areas, species, regulations, and methods that the Council and the Federal government must follow to make changes to the fishery. The plan also creates guidelines for the biennial process of setting harvest levels. Below are three general processes used to regulate groundfish harvests. Since these processes can take up to six months, they may be streamlined for some decisions.

The process for controversial or complex issues takes at least three Council meetings. Proposals for management measures may come from the public, from participating management agencies, from advisory groups, or from Council members. If the Council wants to pursue these proposals, it asks for other possible solutions to the problem being addressed and then directs the Groundfish Management Team (GMT), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and/or Council staff to prepare an analysis. At the next meeting when such a proposal is on the agenda, the Council reviews the analysis and chooses a range of alternatives and possibly a preliminary preferred alternative. The analysis is then made available for public review, and the Council makes a final decision at the next meeting the item is scheduled.

The biennial management process was implemented in 2003 through Amendment 17 to the groundfish FMP and is detailed in Council Operating Procedure 9. Under the biennial cycle, eligible management measures are implemented for a two-year period and adjusted through routine inseason actions. Those management measures not eligible for implementation within the biennium can be considered for future action by the Council in June of the even years (e.g., June 2014). Separate harvest specifications (overfishing limits [OFLs], acceptable biological catches [ABCs], and annual catch limits [ACLs]) are identified for each year in the two-year period. This cycle provides more time for the Council and NMFS to work on other critical groundfish issues, and more time for public comment. At least a three-meeting process (typically September, November, April, and June) is used to decide biennial harvest specifications and management measures:

September (in odd years): the Council adopts final preferred OFLs and a range of ABCs for those stocks the Council wants to explore a change in the harvest control rules; and provides initial fishery management guidance, including a range of new