

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON UPDATE ON 2021-2022 HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Groundfish Advisory Panel (GAP) was briefed by Mr. Patrick Mirick, Groundfish Management Team (GMT), and Ms. Karen Palmigiano, National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region/GMT. The GAP appreciates the work to date performed by the GMT in analyzing the 2021-2022 specifications and management measures package. Generally, the GAP supports the preliminary preferred alternatives adopted by the Council, which appear consistent with the recommendations made by the GAP in November 2019. Furthermore, the GAP views the range of alternatives presented in the GMT report as sufficient with the exception of a small number of additional items the GAP flags for Council consideration.

Some of the actions under consideration for the 2021-22 harvest specifications cycle would require revisions to Amendment 21 allocations. The GAP understands that consideration of those changes is allowable because of the three-meeting process used for developing specifications and management measures. However, the GAP withholds support for these changes at this time. The GAP looks forward to further GMT analysis that will be available at the April 2020 meeting and will consider these changes more thoroughly at that time.

Shortbelly Rockfish – The GMT highlighted the need to clarify the inclusion of Alternative 2 in the specifications package. The GAP supports inclusion of Alternative 2, making shortbelly rockfish an ecosystem component (EC) species, for analysis because the EC species category might be more appropriate for this species, which is not (and likely will not become) a target species. Monitoring of fishery landings is likely sufficiently precautionary rather than developing an annual catch limit (ACL) and accountability measures (AMs).

Petrale sole – The GAP continues to support the no action alternative, which would provide more Petrale sole, one of the highest attained groundfish species, up front. However, the GAP supports retaining Alternatives 1 and 2 for analysis.

Limited Entry and Open Access Fixed Gear Trip Limits – The GMT noted to the GAP their desire to produce analyses of additional trip limits for these sectors that would be available to inform Council action in April 2020. The GAP supports the Council providing guidance to the GMT to produce these analyses (the GAP understands they have already been completed).

At-Sea Set Asides – The GAP, especially at-sea whiting fishery participants, appreciates the diligent consideration given to this issue by the GMT. The analyses developed thus far and anticipated for the April 2020 Council meeting should provide sufficient basis for the Council to establish set-aside amounts for 2021 and 2022. Optimizing sector-specific set-asides could require the use of a combination of approaches (maximum value, average value, Amendment 21 value) depending on the species. Therefore, it is the understanding of the GAP that when the Council takes action on this issue, it will be possible to select set-aside values for specific species from among the various columns presented by the GMT (for example, the options d, e, and f columns in the March 2020 GMT presentation). The GAP also reiterates the importance of identifying

sector-specific set-aside amounts for the next biennial management cycle because it provides a clearer basis for the at-sea sectors to develop bycatch management plans for their respective fisheries. Finally, to provide additional contrast among the set-aside alternatives, the GAP recommends including another alternative that would be based on three-year average bycatch amounts (the GMT currently includes a five-year average alternative). A three-year average, using the most recent three years, would be more reflective of recent fishing conditions on the grounds, where the at-sea sectors have faced the combined effects of multiple species to avoid, increased rockfish stock biomasses, and coastal “habitat compression” similar to that described in the 2020 California Current Ecosystem Status Report ([Agenda Item G.1.a, Supplemental, IEA Team PPT 1, March 2020](#)).

2021-2022 Accountability Measures – Ms. Palmigiano also provided the National Standard 1 Guidelines and Accountability Measures presentation ([H.4.a, Supplemental NMFS Presentation 1, March 2020](#)) to the GAP. The GAP appreciates the comprehensive review of the background for and use of accountability measures (AMs) because it will help the GAP and Council in their consideration of developing AMs for the 2021-2022 cycle. Ms. Palmigiano indicated that AMs for shortbelly rockfish is one issue that should be considered for this specifications and management cycle, especially if the Council does not choose Alternative 2 (EC species) for shortbelly rockfish. The GAP has no recommendation at this time and anticipates further consideration of this issue at the April and June 2020 Council meetings. However, the GAP notes that given the sporadic and volatile nature of how shortbelly rockfish bycatch can occur, industry response (typically in near real time) would likely be more effective in responding to bycatch events than pre-specified regulatory AMs that might not be suited to events as they happen.

Public Comment – The GAP received the same public comment presentation provided to the Council under Open Public Comment ([B.1.b, Supplemental Open Comment PPT 1, March 2020](#)), which requests increased access for blue, deacon, and black rockfish in California. The GAP supports the request in concept. However, it appears (based on GMT advice) that it is too late in the current specifications cycle to include this action. Therefore, the GAP encourages the proponent to work with fishery managers to find the appropriate vehicle to accomplish their request.

In summary, the GAP requests the Council adopt the following in regards to the analysis of the 2021-2022 harvest specifications and management measures, which are, for the most part, clarifications requested by the GMT:

1. Include yelloweye rockfish annual catch targets for non-trawl sectors? – yes. This is the status quo approach.
2. Use yelloweye rockfish off-the-top deduction of 2.92 mt as proposed by GMT? – yes.
3. Maintain alternatives 2 for shortbelly rockfish and Petrale sole for analysis? – yes.
4. Provide new LE and FG OA trip limits and analyses as proposed by GMT? – yes.
5. For analysis, consider combining the nearshore and non-nearshore harvest guidelines for canary rockfish to reduce constraints (as detailed by the GMT in their presentation)? – yes.
6. **New** GAP at-sea set-aside option (three-year average approach). – yes.