GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON BIENNIAL HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2021-2022 FISHERIES - FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation about this issue from Mr. Patrick Mirick, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)/Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and Mr. John DeVore, Pacific Fishery Management Council staff and offers the following comments and recommendations for the 2021-2022 biennial harvest specifications and final preferred alternatives.

The GAP agrees with the GMT on all the alternatives. We summarize key GAP recommendations for several species using Table 2 from the GMT statement under this agenda item.

Alternatives to the default harvest control rule by species from the GMT.

- Council's preliminary preferred alternatives (PPAs) from November 2019 are **bolded**
- GMT recommendations are *italicized*;
- GAP recommendations are highlighted.

In summary, the GAP agrees with the GMT that the PPAs should be adopted as final preferred alternatives (FPAs) with the exception of Petrale sole. For Petrale sole, the GMT now recommends (and the GAP agrees) that the No Action alternative should be adopted as the FPA.

Species	No Action: default HCR	Alt 1	Alt 2
Cowcod south of 40° 10′ N lat.	ACL=ABC, P*= 0.45	***ACL = ABC, P* =0.40***	ACL = ABC, P* = 0.30
OR black rockfish	ACL = ABC, P* = 0.45	***"Case-by-case ABC" ACL = 2020 ABC/ACL***	-------
Petrale sole	*ACL=ABC, P* =0.45*	**ACL=ABC P* 0.40**	"Stair-step" ACLs
Sablefish Part 1: Select coastwide ABC	ABC P* =0.40	***ABC P* =0.45***	-------
Sablefish Part 2: Select method to apportion ABC to ACLs N+S 36° N. lat.	Method 1: Long-term survey avg. (73.6% N; 26.4% S) ***Method 2: 5-year survey average (78.4% N; 21.5% S)***		
Shortbelly rockfish	ABC P* =0.40 ACL=500 mt	***ABC P*= 0.40 ACL=3,000 mt***	EC species

Cowcod South of 40° 10′ N. lat.

The GAP agrees with the GMT (Alternative 1, ACL [annual catch limit] = ABC [acceptable biological catch], P*=0.40), that will allow the selection of an annual catch target (ACT) between 40 and 60 mt. The GAP will discuss the ACT under Agenda Item G.6, 2021-2022 Biennial Management Measures.

Petrale sole

The GAP has consistently supported the No Action alternative, which would result in P*=0.45. This a very important species for the trawl groundfish fishery and the GMT discusses the reasons why it is supporting the No Action alternative. For detailed rationale, the GAP refers to our biennial harvest specifications report in November 2019.

Sablefish

The GAP continues to support Alternative 1, Method 2 for sablefish because it maximizes sector benefits without constraining fisheries south of 36° N. lat., as noted in our November 2019 GAP statement.

Shortbelly rockfish

The GAP agrees that Alternative 1, P*=0.40, ACL=3,000 mt, is sufficient. The P* is precautionary without being restrictive and a 3,000 mt ACL will provide flexibility for both at-sea and shoreside trawl sectors. As we stated during inseason action in June 2019, 2020 harvest specifications for cowcod and shortbelly rockfish in September 2019, 2020 harvest specifications for shortbelly in November 2019, the 3,000 mt level is appropriate because:

- It provides a precautionary buffer below the 2020-2021 ABC (4,184 mt);
- The ACL will allow midwater trawl target fishing (whiting, pelagic rockfish), without unduly constraining these fisheries;
- There is no interest in developing a target fishery due to the small size of individual fish, negligible value and sporadic encounter rates;
- Trawl fisheries actively avoid shortbelly rockfish to reduce damage to target species such as whiting and pelagic rockfish, which are damaged in trawl nets with shortbelly rockfish;
- An unnecessarily low ACL may affect the fleets' abilities to avoid bycatch of other species with greater conservation concerns (for example, Chinook salmon);
- The ACL is well below the estimated maximum sustainable yield (equals the OFL of 6,950 mt) and ABC, ensuring any exploitation is sustainable to the population;
- There is a low likelihood of a negative ecosystem effect given evidence of strong recruitment accompanying the distribution shift north (Supplemental REVISED Attachment 1, pages 44-45); and
- As previously noted in the November GMT statement for 2020 harvest specifications for cowcod and shortbelly rockfish, "Taken together, surveys of forage and predators throughout the [California Current Ecosystem] in 2018 and 2019 indicate that forage species other than shortbelly rockfish were unusually abundant, and that there was higher than average production of several marine predators. The high abundance of forage species

other than shortbelly rockfish may mitigate the impact of shortbelly rockfish bycatch on higher trophic level species in the CCE."

Additionally, substantial public comment about the necessity for additional shortbelly rockfish for trawl flexibility and the absence of interest in developing a fishery for this species was submitted to the Council in June 2019. The GAP agrees with those public comments.

PFMC
04/07/20