

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON 2021 AND 2022 GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) met with stakeholders on January 6, March 11, and again on May 28, 2020 to review and discuss management measures for the 2021-2022 groundfish biennial cycle. At the May 28th meeting we reviewed the range of alternatives adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) for public review which are fully described in Agenda Item [Agenda Item G.6.a, Supp. WDFW Report 1, April 2020](#), and analyzed in [Agenda Item F.1, Attachment 8, June 2020](#).

Based on stakeholder input, WDFW recommends the following management measures as the final preferred alternatives (FPA) for 2021-2022:

Bag Limits and Sublimits (Marine Areas 1 – 4)

1. Revise the provision that allows flatfish retention in excess of the 9 fish daily aggregate limit from three to five flatfish, in all marine areas.

North Coast (Marine Areas 3 and 4)

1. Revise the 20-fathom depth restriction to be in place from June 1 through July 31;
2. Allow the retention of the following species seaward of 20 fathoms on days open to the recreational halibut fishery: Pacific cod, sablefish, lingcod, bocaccio rockfish, silvergray rockfish, canary rockfish, widow rockfish, and yellowtail rockfish;
3. Allow yellowtail and widow rockfish retention seaward of 20 fathoms in July.

South Coast (Marine Area 2)

1. Revise the 30-fathom depth restriction to be in place from May 1 through May 31;
2. Open the deepwater lingcod closure area June 1 – 15 and September 1 – 30;
3. Open the Washington South Coast and Westport YRCAs.

Columbia River (Marine Area 1)

1. Open the deepwater lingcod closure area June 1 – 15 and September 1 – 30;
2. In addition to the species already permissible to retain, allow the retention of yellowtail rockfish, widow rockfish, canary rockfish, redstriped rockfish, greenstriped rockfish, silvergray rockfish, chilipepper, bocaccio, and blue/deacon rockfish on all depth halibut days.

Summary

The FPA differs from the preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) in only two places, the time frame when the 20-fathom depth restriction is in place in the north coast subarea and the specific groundfish species that will be allowed on halibut trips in the Columbia River subarea. All other recommendations are the same as approved as the PPA. Projected mortality for the Washington recreational fishery in 2021 and 2022 under the FPA is summarized in Table 1.

Stakeholders from the north coast subarea preferred the option to keep the 20-fathom depth restriction in place from June 1 through the end of July. This alternative implements the depth restriction for a shorter time period than the other alternative that would go through August 15th but can be extended through state emergency regulations if catch of yelloweye rockfish is higher than expected. Adoption of this time frame for the 20-fathom depth restriction removes the need to allow yellowtail rockfish and widow rockfish retention seaward of 20 fathoms during the month of August as described in the PPA since that will automatically occur when the depth restriction is lifted after July 31.

Stakeholders from the Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea requested consideration for allowing the retention of more groundfish species with halibut on board during the all-depth halibut fishery. Currently, groundfish retention on halibut days is limited to flatfish, sablefish, and Pacific cod; lingcod retention is also allowed with halibut on board north of the Washington–Oregon border.

During the recent meeting with stakeholders, we heard some support for allowing the retention of all groundfish species, with specific interest in retaining black rockfish. However, WDFW recommends the alternative that aligns groundfish retention regulations in Washington and Oregon. This alternative is more in line with the precautionary approach taken in all other management areas by adjusting recreational management measures to allow the retention of healthy rockfish species in a way that minimizes catch of rockfish species such as black rockfish and other nearshore rockfish, where increased mortality could risk exceeding harvest guidelines (HGs). In addition, this alternative will simplify regulations in an area where multi-state management can result in rules that are difficult to follow.

In conclusion, the FPAs recommended in this report reflect the continued interest by both WDFW and Washington stakeholders to consider measures that increase access to fishing areas and healthy groundfish stocks in a precautionary manner that recognize uncertainty in projected catch, particularly for yelloweye rockfish.

WDFW's regulatory processes can react quickly to the need for additional depth restrictions, area closures, groundfish retention restrictions, or changes to seasons through emergency changes to state regulations if inseason catch reports indicate that recreational harvests of overfished species or non-overfished species are exceeding pre-season projections to the point where HGs, annual catch limits (ACTs), or ACLs are at risk of being exceeded.

Table 1. 2019 final mortality, 2021-2022 HG/ACT, and projected mortality (mt) for the Washington recreational fishery under the FPA.

Stock				2021-2022
	2019 Final Mortality	2021 WA HG/ACT	2022 WA HG/ACT	Projected mortality FPA
Canary Rockfish	13.47	43.2	42.2	15.34
YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH	3.73	9.7 / 7.5	9.9 / 7.8	5.72
Black Rockfish	234.49	274.9	272.9	234.49
Lingcod	170.11			183.89
Nearshore Rockfish	10.04	18.4	17.7	10.04
<i>Blue Rockfish</i>	1.24	6.3	6.1	1.24
<i>Quillback Rockfish</i>	3.16	0.7	0.7	3.16
<i>Copper Rockfish</i>	3.08	2.1	2.1	3.08
<i>China Rockfish</i>	2.56	9.1	8.7	2.56
<i>Brown Rockfish</i>	-	-	-	-
<i>Grass Rockfish</i>	-	-	-	-
Yellowtail Rockfish	48.21			60.46
Vermilion Rockfish	2.69			3.24
WA Cabezon/Kelp Greenling	10.64	17.7	15.1	10.64
Cabezon	9.01	12.2	9.6	9.01
Kelp Greenling	1.63	5.5	5.5	1.63