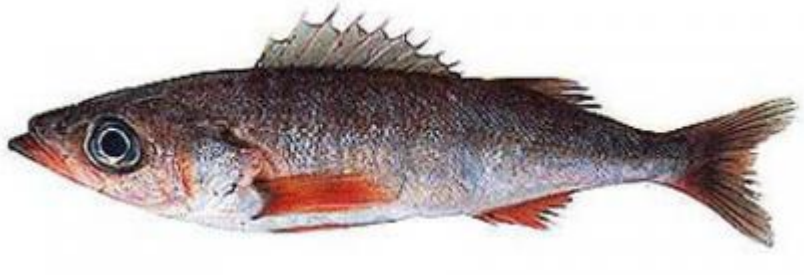
Shortbelly Rockfish Management

Agenda Item F.1 Public Comment

Geoff Shester, Ph.D.



Juvenile shortbelly rockfish off Mission Beach, CA

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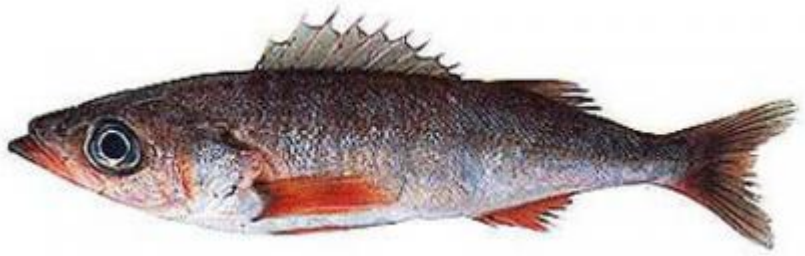
Importance of Shortbelly Rockfish



- Juveniles are major prey for wide suite of fish, mammals, and seabirds
- Endangered species (e.g., Chinook salmon, California least tern)
- Most abundant species in both fisheries independent surveys and seabird diets in southern CA Current region (Warzybok et al. 2018)
- Seabird productivity depends on shortbelly availability
- Accessible to breeding colonies

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Shortbelly Rockfish Bycatch

- 90+% bycatch from whiting
- All 3 whiting sectors involved

Annual total west coast shortbelly rockfish catch in metric tons (mt)):

Sector	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
CP whiting (at-sea)	0	0	0	0	0	0	141	86	31
MS whiting (at-sea)	0	0	1	0	0	2	28	142	344
SS whiting (shoreside)	0	0	2	0	1	23	125	244	230
Mid-water NW trawl	Not applicable - fishery started in 2017						4	32	36
Bottom trawl	11	5	18	8	4	1	1	1	3
Non-trawl	< 0.1								
Off-top (IOA/tribe/research)	2	2	4	10	4	4	22	4	9
Total all sectors	12	7	25	18	9	30	321	509	653

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Figure courtesy Patrick Mirick

Council Objectives on Shortbelly Rockfish

1. Prevent new directed fishing from starting
2. Minimize incidental catch
3. Do not unnecessarily constrain existing fisheries

These were achieved in the past by setting low ACLs

- Areas of general agreement
  - Recognize shortbelly is an important forage species
  - Shortbelly abundance has likely increased
  - Would like a simple, long-term solution
  - Industry not currently interested in directed fishing

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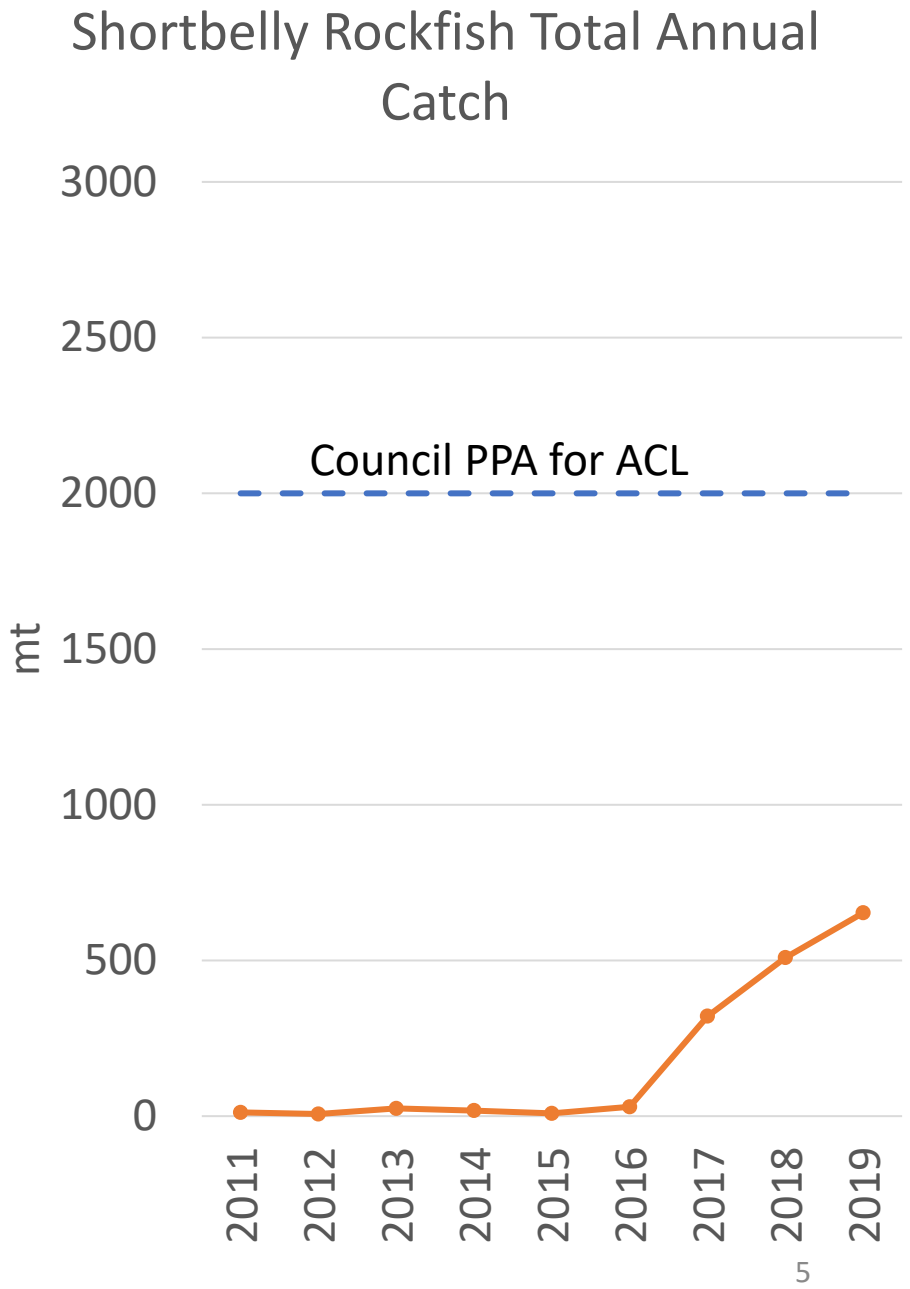
Council's April 2020 PPA

- Keep shortbelly rockfish "in the fishery", not "ecosystem component"
  - Maintains management and monitoring requirements
- 2,000 mt ACL
  - 3x greater than largest annual catch to date; plenty of buffer in case of continued increase
  - Provides incentives to minimize incidental catch – change fishing behavior
- Accountability measures for exceeding ACL not specified



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Preventing directed fishing

- Why necessary? → Increased ACL no longer prevents directed fishing

- How is a directed fishing prohibition implemented? Examples:
  - Prohibited species – all sales prohibited
  - Shared EC species – can't land without other species, plus limits:

Landings limits (per vessel):

- 10 mt per trip all EC species combined
- 30 mt per calendar year all EC species combined

Annual processing limits MS/CP:

- 1 mt limit for non-squid EC species combined
- 40 mt limit for squid EC species combined

Pacific whiting trawl (NOAA)

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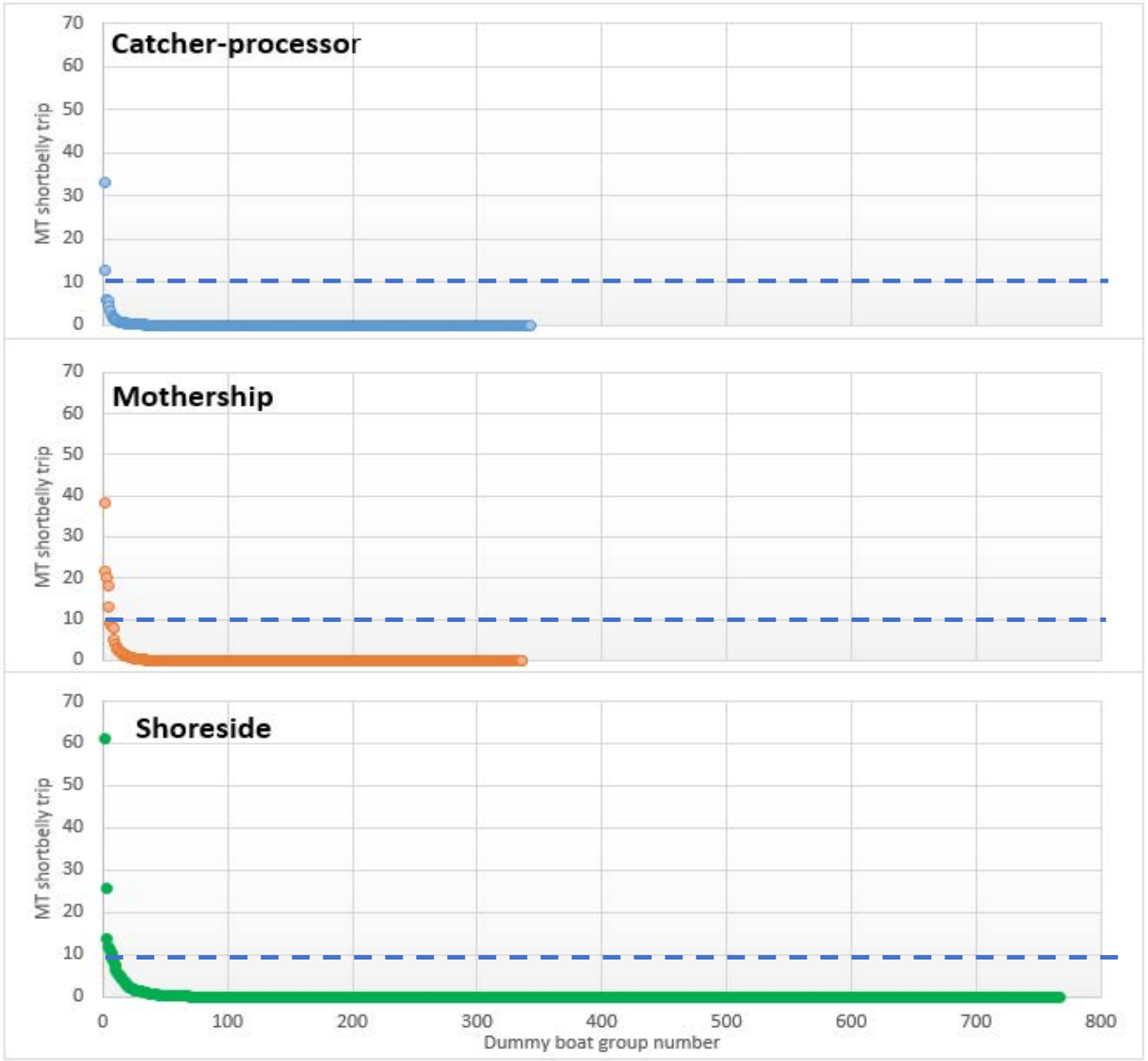

10 mt threshold

- Over 99% of all recent trips have caught less than 10 metric tons of shortbelly rockfish
- Limit would provide a strong block on a targeted fishery

Figure courtesy Patrick Mirick

A Simple Proposal to Prevent Directed Fishing for Shortbelly Rockfish

- At-sea sectors:
  - 10 metric ton processing cap (must discard overage)
- Shoreside sector:
  - Option 1: 10 metric ton landings cap (proceeds from selling overage goes to states)
  - Option 2: Prohibit sale
    - Landings allowed, but all goes $0 on a fish ticket.
    - Shoreside processors can sell
- Request to analyze and flesh these ideas out to minimize disruption to industry, ensure enforceable

Pacific whiting catch (NOAA)

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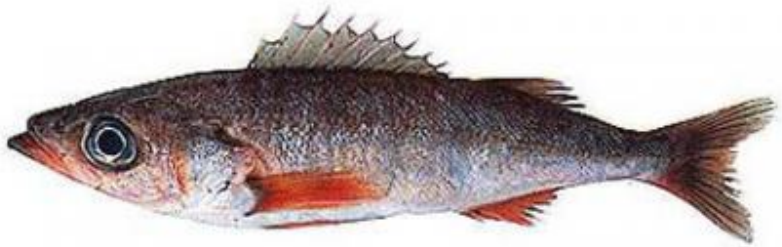
Requests for Shortbelly Rockfish

- Keep “in the fishery” (do not move to Ecosystem Component)
- Adopt FPA of 2,000 mt ACL that closes fishery if exceeded
- Adopt an ACT below the ACL
- Add “scoping a directed fishing prohibition for shortbelly rockfish” to future meeting agenda



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