GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS – FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the progress of the groundfish fisheries to date and offers the following updates and recommendations.

Action Items

Bocaccio south of 40° 10′ N. lat.

Requests were received from southern California fixed gear fishery participants to increase bocaccio south of 40° 10′ N. lat. trip limits: Limited Entry (LE) to 6,000 lbs. per 2 months and Open Access (OA) to 4,000 lbs. per 2 months.

As shown in Table 1, Option 1 reflects the status quo trip limit of 1,500 lbs. per 2 months for LE between 40° 10′ to 34° 27′ N. lat, 1,500 lbs. per 2 months with period 2 closed for LE south of 34° 27′ N. lat, and 500 lbs. per 2 months for OA south of 40° 10′ N lat. The projected mortality from Option 1 is 19.1 mt, which is less than 0.1 percent of the commercial share, and the projected total mortality is approximately 13.5 percent of the non-trawl allocation (Table 2).

Option 2 in Table 1 would increase the LE trip limit in both areas to 6,000 lbs. per 2 months and increase the OA trip limits to 4,000 lbs. per 2 months. The projected mortality from Option 2 is 58.8 mt, which is approximately 16 percent of the commercial share, and the projected total mortality is approximately 17 percent of the non-trawl allocation (Table 2). Projected increases in landings are 39.7 mt and ex-vessel revenue would be approximately $189,000.

Table 1. Status quo (SQ) and proposed trip limits for bocaccio south of 40° 10′ N. lat.

Option	**Sector**	**Geographic** Area	**Jan-Feb**	**Mar-Apr**	**May-Jun**	**Jul-Aug**	**Oct-Sep**	**Nov-Dec**
1 (SQ)	LE	40°10′ to 34° 27′ N. lat	1,500 lb./ 2 months					
	LE	South of 34° 27′ N. lat.	1,500 lb./ 2 months	CLOSED	1,500 lb./ 2 months	1,500 lb./ 2 months	1,500 lb./ 2 months	1,500 lb./ 2 months
	OA	South of 40° 10′ N. lat.	500 lb./ 2 months	CLOSED	500 lb./ 2 months	500 lb./ 2 months	500 lb./ 2 months	500 lb./ 2 months
2	LE	40°10′ to 34° 27′ N. lat	1,500 lb./ 2 months			6,000 lb./ 2 months		
	LE	South of 34° 27′ N. lat.	1,500 lb./ 2 months	CLOSED	1,500 lb./ 2 months	6,000 lb./ 2 months		
	OA	South of 40° 10′ N. lat.	500 lb./ 2 months	CLOSED	500 lb./ 2 months	4,000 lb./ 2 months		

Table 2. Projected mortality from Status quo (SQ) and proposed trip limits for bocaccio south of 40° 10′ N. lat. under Option 1 or Option 2 compared to the 2020 commercial (non-nearshore and nearshore) share, non-trawl allocation, and ACL.

Option	Sector	Geographic Area	Projected mortality (mt)	Commercial share (mt)	Non-trawl projected mortality (mt) a/	Non-trawl share (mt)	ACL (mt)
1 (SQ)	LE	40° 10′ to 34° 27′ N. lat.	11.0	370.6	162.1	1,197.8	2,011
	LE	South of 34° 27′ N. lat.	2.7				
	OA	South of 40° 10’ N. lat.	5.4				
Total for Option 1			***19.1***				
2	LE	40° 10′ to 34° 27′ N. lat.	23.6	370.6	201.8		
	LE	South of 34° 27′ N. lat.	7.9				
	OA	South of 40° 10’ N. lat.	27.3				
Total for Option 2			***58.8***				

a/ Includes a CA recreational mortality of 143 mt based on 2019 harvest levels.

As noted in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) informational report (Agenda Item F.4.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1), commercial (LE and OA fixed gear) landings of bocaccio are tracking higher than in previous years, despite the impacts the commercial fishery is incurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, looking at 2019 mortality estimates, as noted in Table 3, attainment was 22.1 percent of the annual catch limit (ACL). Even with the LE and OA fishery tracking high for 2020 and the addition of these higher trip limits, the GMT anticipates low to moderate attainment for 2020.

Table 3. Estimated total mortality from all groundfish fisheries compared to the 2019 and 2020 ACL. Data source: PacFIN APEX database.

Sector	Est Tot Mort (mt)	
	2019	2020*
Commercial fixed gear	18.4	11.6
CA Rec	143.0	7.0
IFQ	298.3	123.8
Off-the-top	3.6	0.7
Total	463.3	143.0
ACL	2,097.0	2,077.0
% of ACL	22.1%	6.9%

*Data through 6/17/2020

GMT notes, higher trip limits for other shelf rockfish were recently implemented, thus increasing bocaccio trip limits would help to mitigate against any potential regulatory discarding that may occur under the status quo trip limits. Therefore, **the GMT recommends Option 2 for bocaccio south of 40° 10′ N. lat.**

Informational Items
Recreational Fisheries Updates

Washington

The Washington coastal recreational bottomfish (i.e., groundfish) fishery opened on March 14, 2020. Following the initiation of Governor Inslee's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order on March 23, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) closed all recreational fishing activity on the Washington coast. However, some ports began restricting access to boat launches, public restrooms and moorage as early as March 16, resulting in very little opportunity for any recreational fishing. All coastal ports and fishing areas remained closed until May 26, with the exception of Marine Area 4, which remained closed for fishing until the currently scheduled opening date of June 20 It is worth noting that even though Marine Area 3 opened on May 26 and Marine Area 4 will be open by June 20, La Push and Neah Bay will not be accessible. This may reduce the effort and impacts to groundfish stocks in those areas (particularly yelloweye rockfish, which is more frequently encountered in these areas relative to others), because anglers will need to travel from points of entry much further away in order to access those fishing areas.. With the limited opportunity, very few impacts to groundfish stocks occurred before the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order.

Currently, with the reopening of recreational fishing along much of the Washington coast, effort remains low in comparison to previous years. Charter boats have specific requirements for how many passengers and different households they can have on board. Pacific halibut fishing off Washington is postponed until later this summer, so the entirety of that effort is currently absent. Impacts remain low, and it is unknown how the season will progress given the current state of affairs.

Oregon

Governor Brown issued the "Stay Home; Save Lives" executive order on March 23, 2020. Responses to the executive order varied by port. The ports from Florence north closed most of their facilities (i.e., boat ramps, cleaning stations, restrooms), and the charter operators ceased operations. The ports from Winchester Bay south remained open, or mostly open, including some of the charter operations. Additionally, some of the south coast businesses promoted that they were open via social media, as well as advertising in more populous inland areas. The ports from Florence north started to reopen on May 15, with most facilities and businesses open by May 21, to coincide with a recreational Pacific halibut opening. Most charter operations began operating at reduced capacity. The closures on the north coast did reduce bottomfish effort, particularly charter effort, compared to the previous three years. Meanwhile, several south coast ports had similar, or slightly higher, effort to the same time frame in the previous three years. Coastwide bottomfish effort was reduced compared to the previous three years, estimated angler trips through May in 2020 is approximately 23,000 compared to an average of 31,000 for the previous three years (26 percent decrease).

These effort reductions and associated catch reductions have led projected year-end impacts for some species (including black rockfish) to decrease from pre-season estimates. With the reduction in impacts during the time period with restrictions in place, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) staff have reported that they have received requests to provide additional harvesting opportunities by increasing the general marine fish daily bag limit whenever possible.

Currently the general marine daily bag limit is 5 fish per day in Oregon state regulations and 10 fish in Federal regulations, which allows ODFW the flexibility to increase the bag limit in state regulation inseason, while still staying within the Federal bag limit regulation.

California

CDFW submitted an informational report (Agenda Item F.4.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1) detailing the current status of lack of recreational sampling activity and catch estimates as a result of impacts associated with COVID-19. The recreational fishery in California opened on March 1 in the Southern Management Area (MA) followed by the Central and San Francisco MAs on April 1, and the Northern and Mendocino MAs on May 1. The report notes that in early March, when shelter-in-place orders went into effect, general effort has been variable depending on access to harbor facilities, but overall harvest is at or within typical catch levels.

At-Sea Update

With 43 percent attainment of Pacific whiting allocation, the at-sea sectors are at 87 percent of their darkblotched rockfish set aside, 23 percent of yellowtail, 14 percent of sablefish, with all other set-asides tracking at less than 10 percent. There is not anticipated to be any risk to the ACL for any of these stocks at this time.

Reporting tool for 2020 Commercial Fisheries Landings

Erin Steiner and Ashley Vizek, economists at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, have developed a publicly available landings tracker to give weekly and monthly snapshots of where West Coast fisheries are at in the ongoing crisis, relative to 2015-2019. Summary data on ex-vessel revenue, landed weight, prices, and numbers of vessels and buyers are available for various fisheries by state at weekly or monthly intervals.

Per the tracker, deliveries and landings (mt) in the mothership and shorebased whiting sectors are tracking slightly above the prior five-year median to date, and the catcher-processor sector is continuing to follow the upward trend of the past decade, with the highest May catch since 1997. Salmon revenue appears to be slightly above the historic median (well below boom years), and shrimp revenue is low. Market squid exvessel revenues were high relative to recent years in Oregon, and the economic backbone of West Coast fisheries, Dungeness crab, was slightly above the 2015-2019 median in peak-season January, and slightly below in the trailing months subsequently, but above the 2015 disaster year.

Exvessel revenue of non-whiting groundfish (all sectors) was about half of the 2015-2019 median in April and May, with a slight uptick in May from a low in April (Figure 1).

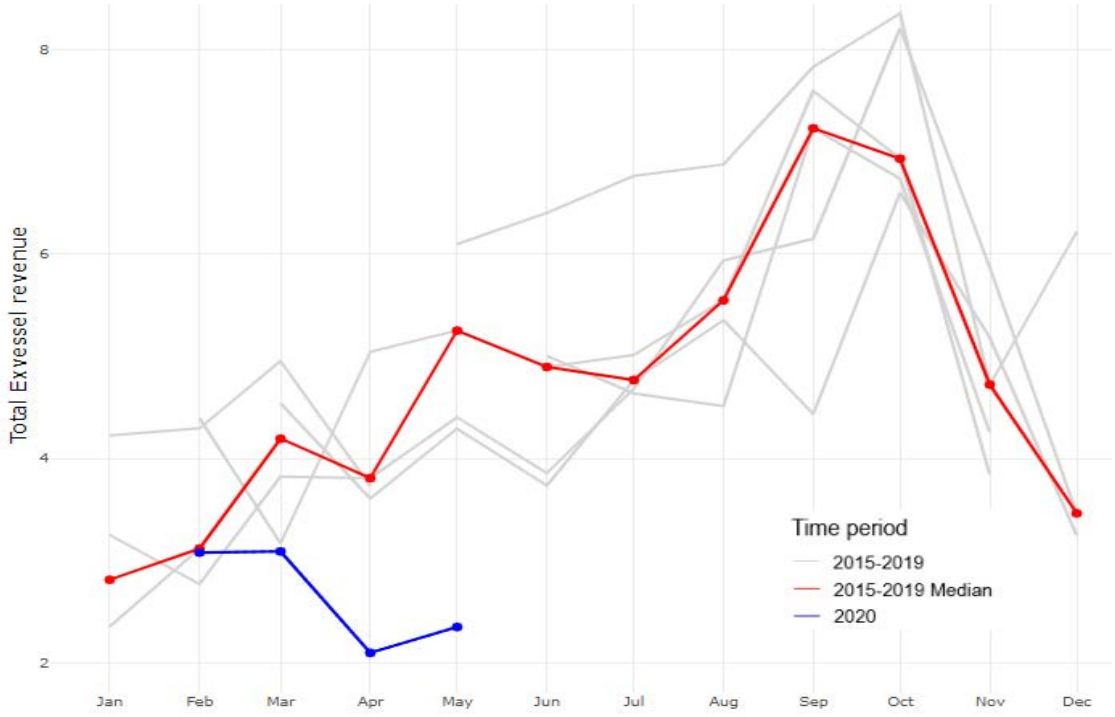

Figure 1. Total Exvessel revenue (in millions, inflation adjusted to 2019 dollars) associated with landings of non-whiting groundfish (all sectors, all states). The grey lines represent 2015-2019 fishing years, with the red line the 2015-2019 median. The blue line shows the 2020 revenue to date. Plot source and data information: NOAA Fisheries NWFSC 2020 Landings Tracker.

This non-whiting groundfish fishery decline is largely attributable to the continued decline in sablefish prices (Figure 2).

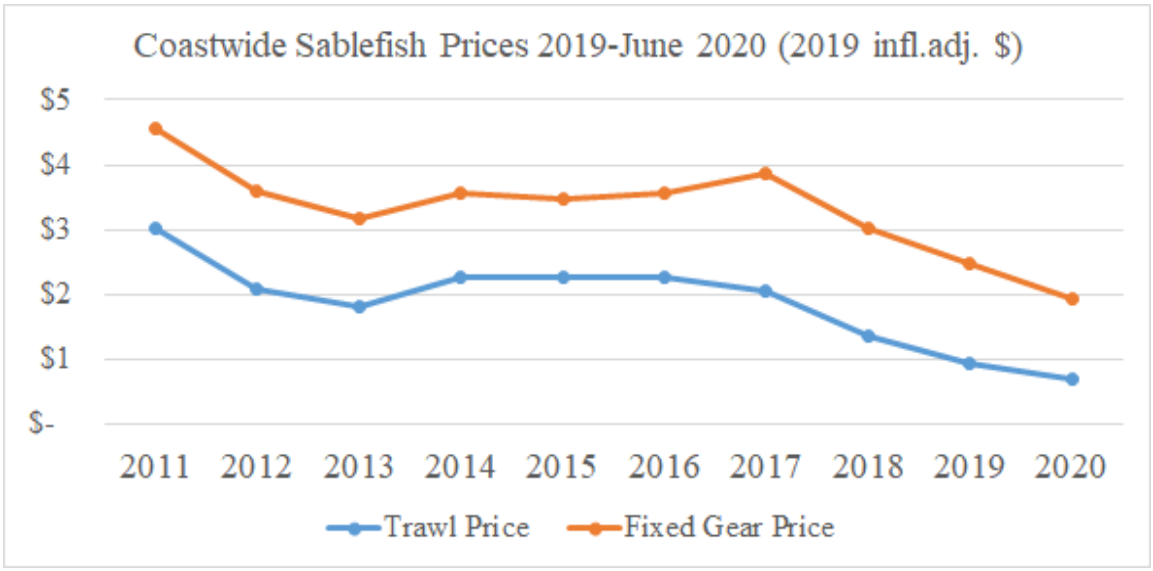

Figure 2. Coastwide sablefish prices by gear type from 2011 to mid-June 2020 (inflation adjusted to 2019 dollars), data from PacFIN 6/17/2020.

Rebuilding Species Scorecard

Attachment 1 shows the updated rebuilding species scorecard for yelloweye rockfish and cowcod. The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) has announced that due to COVID-19 related issues, they will not be starting their annual stock assessment survey until July 1, 2020. Additionally, to stay within the normal survey timeline, IPHC will only be surveying core areas of the Pacific halibut stock, which does not include Area 2A (WA, OR, & CA). Therefore, the 1.1 mt yelloweye rockfish set-aside for that survey will not be needed, and has been returned to the scorecard. Additionally, cowcod was updated to include the impact from the non-nearshore fishery—this projection should have been included in the March 2020 update. All fisheries are projected to be within their allocations, harvest guidelines (HGs), annual catch targets (ACTs), and shares.

Chinook Salmon Scorecard

The 2017 Salmon Incidental Take Statement specified thresholds for the non-whiting and whiting sectors. These thresholds are enforced through sector closure mechanisms in regulations. For 2020, neither the whiting nor the non-whiting sectors exceeded their thresholds (Table 3). Estimated overall catch of Chinook salmon as of June 17, 2020 in all groundfish fisheries was fish, or percent of the 20,000 threshold.

Table 4. Chinook salmon catch by groundfish fisheries in 2020 through June 17, 2020, as well as sector thresholds. Source: PacFIN Endangered Species Act [ESA] Salmon Scorecard.

Sector	Sub-Sector	Catch To Date	Threshold	% of Threshold
Whiting	CP	332	11,000	9
	MS	43		
	Shoreside a/	104		
	Tribal b/	560		
	Total	*1039*		
Non-Whiting	Bottom Trawl a/	221	5,500	14
	Midwater Trawl a/	11		
	Fixed Gear c/	500		
	WA Rec c/			
	OR Rec + longleader c/			
	CA Rec c/			
	Tribal b/	25		
	Total	*757*		
All groundfish fisheries		1796	20,000	9

a/ In-season estimates for catch shares fleets do not include trips during the two-week observer coverage waiver period.
b/ Current year tribal landings are a maximum of the observed landings from 2016 to 2018.
c/ GMT proposed assumption of mortality, which assumed maximum historical mortality (154) plus a 250 fish buffer from the 2017 BiOp and an additional 96 fish to account for some uncertainty in recreational salmon seasons; recreational estimates only apply to groundfish fisheries occurring outside of salmon seasons.

Attachment 1. Allocations[a] and projected mortality impacts (mt) of rebuilding groundfish species for 2020.

Fishery	Cowcod b/		Yelloweye		
Date: June 18, 2020	**Allocations a/**	**Projected Impacts**	**HG Allocations a/**	**ACT Allocations a/**	**Projected Impacts**
Off the Top Deductions	2.0	2.0	6.1	6.1	5.2
EFP b/	0.00	0.00	0.24	0.24	0.02
Research c/	2.0	2.0	2.9	2.9	**1.6**
Incidental OA d/	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.6	1.3
Tribal e/			2.3	2.3	2.3
Bottom Trawl					0.0
Troll					0.0
Fixed gear			2.3	2.3	2.3
mid-water					0.0
whiting					
Trawl Allocations	2.2	0.2	3.4		0.1
-SB Trawl	2.2	0.2	3.4		0.1
-At-Sea Trawl			0.0		0.0
a) At-sea whiting MS					
b) At-sea whiting CP					
Non-Trawl Allocation	3.8	2.6	39.5	30.3	16.2
Non-Nearshore		1.0	2.1	1.7	0.8
LE FG		1.0			0.7
OA FG					0.1
Directed OA: Nearshore		0.0	6.0	4.7	2.2
Recreational Groundfish					
WA			10.2	8.1	5.2
OR			9.1	7.2	4.7
CA		1.6	11.9	9.4	3.3
TOTAL	6.0	4.8	49.0	36.4	**21.5**
Harvest Specification	**6.0**	**6.0**	**49**	**43**	39
Difference	0.0	1.2	0.0	6.6	**17.5**
Percent of ACL	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	84.6%	55.2%
Key			= not applicable		
	--		= trace, less than 0.1 mt		
			= Fixed Values		
			= off the top deductions		

a/ Formal allocations are represented in the black shaded cells and are specified in regulation in Tables 1b and 1e. The other values in the allocation columns are 1) off the top deductions, 2) set asides from the trawl allocation 3) ad-hoc allocations recommended in the 2019-2020 EIS process, 4) HG for the recreational fisheries for yelloweye rockfish.
b/ EFPs are amounts set aside to accommodate anticipated applications. Values in this table represent the estimates provided by the applicants and approved by the Council, which are currently specified in regulation.
c/ Includes NMFS trawl shelf-slope surveys, the IPHC halibut survey, and expected impacts from SRPs and LOAs.
d/ The GMT's best estimate of impacts as analyzed in the 2019-2020 Environmental Impact Statement (Appendix B), which are currently specified in regulation.
e/ Tribal values in the allocation column represent the the values in regulation. Projected impacts are the tribes best estimate of catch.

PFMC
06/17/20