

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON THE FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN UPDATE

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received an overview from Dr. Kit Dahl, Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Council) staff, and reviewed the documents in the advanced briefing book, and offer the following comments.

Draft Chapter 3 of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan

Chapter 3 of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) provides a comprehensive overview of the California Current Ecosystem (CCE) organized into well thought out sections. We are providing comments, suggestions, and edits on specific sections, following the naming and order used in the Draft Revised Chapter 3 in the Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) Report 1 ([Agenda Item F.2.a, EWG Report 1, September 2020](#)). The GMT has no edits or comments for unlisted sections.

3.4. Fisheries of the CCE

3.4.2. Current Fisheries

The EWG specifically requested comments on whether describing fisheries by habitat type is a useful revision. While this is not how fisheries in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) are described or separated, we see the benefits of this method when describing commercial fisheries across FMPs. However, this method may not work as well for recreational fisheries, as discussed below.

3.4.2.2. Descriptions of Major Commercial Fisheries in the CCE

In the section on “Pelagic Trawl Gear”, subsection *Vessels using midwater trawl gear to target Pacific whiting*, on page 36 appears to include an error. A sentence states that “In the last ten years 11 vessels participated in the at-sea sector and eight vessels in the mothership sector.” Based on our analysis, we would recommend this be presented as “In the last ten years, 11 vessels have participated in the catcher-processor sector, with eight motherships and 26 catcher vessels participating in the mothership sector.” Furthermore, the section notes that the principal ports for shoreside whiting are Westport and Ilwaco, Washington and Astoria, Oregon. Based on our analysis, while Ilwaco does receive some whiting landings, the port averaged less than three percent of the total shoreside whiting revenue from 2011-2019. The GMT recommends instead including Newport, Oregon, which has averaged the second highest percent of shoreside whiting revenue at 34 percent in the same time period, slightly below Astoria at 39 percent and Westport at 24 percent.

In the following subsection *Vessels targeting pelagic rockfish species (principally widow rockfish and yellowtail rockfish) using midwater trawl gear* on page 36, there appears to be an error in the last sentence. The sentence states “But since its reemergence in 2012, this fishery has grown steadily with landings reaching 1,153 mt in 2018, worth \$6.6 million”. While some midwater rockfish targeting began in 2012, widow and canary rockfish were still overfished, limiting most vessels. The actual “reemergence” of the fishery would be more accurately described as occurring in 2017 with the rebuilding of canary rockfish. Landings increased from just over 1,000 mt in

2016 to almost 6,000 mt in 2017 in the targeted midwater fishery. The GMT suggests that the authors consider updating the history of the fishery given these facts.

In the section on “Benthic Trawl Gear”, the subsection *Vessels targeting groundfish with bottom trawl gear* discusses how this fishery operates within the individual fishing quota (IFQ) program and describes the requirements associated with the program. The GMT notes that the shoreside whiting and midwater rockfish fishery discussed in previous sections also operate within the IFQ program, and therefore the GMT recommends that the overview of the program requirements be described in the first section in the document (whiting) and referred to in the following sections.

Finally, the GMT recommends that the document note that Washington state waters are closed to commercial groundfish fishing in the subsection *Vessels using fixed gear and other hook and line gear types to target rockfish and other groundfish in nearshore waters* within the “Benthic Fixed Gear (longline and pot gear)” section.

3.4.4. Recreational Fisheries

The GMT understands that this section is intended to be completed between now and March 2021, and provide some thoughts to consider in describing recreational fisheries.

Recreational fisheries data may not be able to be stratified by habitat type. As an example, Oregon has both a regular multi-species bottomfish fishery and a relatively new longleader gear (Holloway Gear) fishery. The longleader gear fishery targets pelagic rockfish species (yellowtail, widow, canary rockfish), while the regular bottomfish fishery tends to target more benthic species (black rockfish, cabezon, lingcod). However, in the state sampling program, anglers participating in both of those fisheries are sampled and counted as “bottomfish” targeted trips. Therefore, it might be better to characterize the fisheries based on trip-target type, in the same manner as the state sampling programs (e.g. bottomfish, salmon, Pacific halibut, highly migratory species, etc.). Data is more readily available in those categories, as opposed to benthic versus pelagic. Additionally, while commercial fisheries use a variety of gear types, all recreational fisheries use hook and line gear.

Recreational fisheries could also be subset into private anglers and charter/party-boat anglers to reflect differences in economics, fishing behaviour, and, in some areas/fisheries, magnitude of catches. Additionally, some private anglers fish from shore and manmade structures.

3.4.5. Fishery Related Data Systems

The GMT understands that this section is also intended to be completed between now and March 2021. We were not able to discuss this topic now, but we are willing to assist the EWG in identifying appropriate data systems with which we are familiar.

3.4.6. Fishing Communities

3.4.6.1. Puget Sound

The Groundfish FMP does not cover groundfish species or groundfish fisheries in Puget Sound. However, Puget Sound ports (i.e. Bellingham) have historical groundfish landings. Further, as the homeport of many vessels, the Puget Sound is included as an Input-output model for Pacific Coast fisheries (IOPAC) community when completing groundfish impact analyses. **Therefore, the GMT recommends Puget Sound be included.**

3.4.6.3. Astoria

There is a request for comments on whether Astoria should be treated as a separate region or be included within the Oregon Coast. Given that multiple fisheries land within the ports surrounding the Columbia River, including Astoria, Chinook, and Warrenton, the GMT recommends either that all Columbia River ports be grouped together or that Ilwaco/Chinook remain in the Washington Coast section, and Astoria/Warrenton/Hammond be included as a port group within the Oregon Coast heading, as typically done for the groundfish impact analyses.

3.5.2.2. Groundfish FMP

(8) shortbelly rockfish

The GMT recommends adopting the following revised language suggested for this section:

“Allowable harvest of shortbelly rockfish, an abundant species with high prey value to the CCE, had been set extremely low to accommodate incidental catch while discouraging any fishery development to ensure that it retains its role as prey for other (non-human) predator species. Incidental catches of shortbelly reached unprecedented levels beginning in 2017 based on a boom and shift northward in the population. In June 2020, the Council recommended designating the stock as an EC species while identifying a clear trigger for revisiting the need for active bycatch management.”

(11) sorting

The GMT recommends revising the language as:

“Regulations require fishery participants in non-maximized retention fisheries to sort catch, both at-sea discard and landings, by FMP species or grouping as appropriate, ensuring continued high quality, long-term data on the hugely varied groundfish species catch, discards at sea, and landings. [Groundfish]”

3.5.3. CCE Species Managed Under the ESA, MMPA, and MBTA

If Puget Sound (3.4.6.1.) is excluded from the regions summarized in this chapter, then the three Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species in Puget Sound should also be excluded from Table 3-7. If Puget Sound is included, then those ESA-listed species should remain in the table. However, yelloweye rockfish, Puget Sound/Georgia Basin distinct population segment, appears to be listed twice, the third row down and sixth row down in the section titled “Fish” at the top of page 52. **The GMT recommends one of those be removed.**

Proposed outline of Chapters 4 and 5

The GMT supports the proposed outline of Chapters 4 and 5, with the updates shown in [Agenda Item F.2, Attachment 1, September 2020](#). The GMT will review and provide comments on those chapters when requested.

PFMC

09/14/20