Non-trawl Groundfish Area Management Modifications: Scoping Discussion Document

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduled to conduct a public scoping session during its April 2021 Council meeting to discuss potential non-trawl sector groundfish area management modifications that may improve access and opportunity for non-trawl sector fishery participants. Area Management is a catch-all term used in this document to signify the existing groundfish depth/area-based closures defined as the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (NT-RCA). While the Council has taken up narrow aspects of area management, e.g., NT-RCA boundary changes, recent public comments, advisory body reports, and Council discussion all suggest broader action is desired in order to modernize area management and achieve Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) goals.

The objective of this document is to assist stakeholders, advisory bodies, and the Council in an initial scoping discussion. We pose a series of overarching questions to foster an in-depth conversation on the goals and objectives for this action.

Given the vast array of potential measures that the Council could explore as part of this action, we use the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel's (GAP) area management proposals for NT-RCA boundary changes from Informational Report 4, June 2020 (IR4) as a foundation to initiate Council discussion. Briefly, the proposal/measures described in IR4 are NT-RCA boundary changes, allowing non-bottom contact groundfish fishing gear use in the NT-RCA (e.g., Emley-Platt Exempted Fishing Permit [EFP]), and retention of incidentally caught rockfish in the NT-RCA by the salmon troll fishery. While IR4 includes a Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA) modification proposal, per direction from the Council at their March meeting, we exclude it from the following discussion.

In addition, the GAP met on February 16, 2021 to continue scoping in preparation for the April 2021 Council meeting. During that meeting some participants focused on additional solutions, including non-bottom contact gear implementation. During the April Council meeting we expect additional discussion and possibly new proposals (or refinement of existing proposals in IR4) to be provided to the Council for consideration.

1. Background

The NT-RCA is a coastwide, contiguous area bounded by specific latitude and longitude coordinates that approximate depth contours[1]. It largely closes and prohibits fishing in what is considered the West Coast continental shelf to the non-trawl groundfish fishery which includes the limited entry fixed-gear (LEFG) and open access (OA) non-trawl gear fisheries.[2]

The origins of the current NT-RCA can be traced back to 2002 when the Council began to close areas to the non-trawl sector as a conservation measure to minimize catch of overfished groundfish species in order

[1] Coordinates specified at CFR 50 §§ 660.71-660.74.

[2] Definition of Non-Trawl (Limited Entry Fixed-gear and Open Access Non-Trawl Gears) RCAs. Non-trawl RCAs are intended to protect a complex of species, such as overfished shelf rockfish species, and have boundaries defined by specific latitude and longitude coordinates approximating depth contours. Fishing for groundfish with nontrawl gear is prohibited. Nontrawl gear means all legal commercial groundfish gear other than trawl gear. See Reference section in this document and definitions at electronic code of regulations at §660.11 Conservation Measures 1(vi)(B)

to aid in rebuilding. These closed areas eventually became what is now called the NT-RCA

As species rebuilt, the Council made changes to the seaward and shoreward boundaries of the NT-RCA. Many of these changes have been made in the biennial groundfish management process. In fact, the last NT-RCA modifications occurred under the 2021-2022 groundfish harvest specification and management measure process, which included multiple seaward and shoreward NT-RCA boundary adjustments. This action is an opportunity for the Council to consider large-scale changes to NT-RCA management outside of the biennial harvest specifications and management measure process.

Even though the Council changed NT-RCA boundaries, the non-trawl sector is still unable to access depths where many shelf rockfish stocks (e.g., yellowtail rockfish, chilipepper rockfish, etc.)[3] are abundant. The current depth boundaries, however, may be contributing to why the non-trawl sector's attainment of shelf groundfish species remains low and the potential benefits of harvesting these species unrealized by industry. For example, in 2019, roughly five percent of yellowtail rockfish south of 40°10' N. lat. and approximately three percent of chilipepper south of 40°10' N. lat non-trawl allocations were landed.

The GAP and stakeholders requested the Council consider modifying the NT-RCA to allow access to healthy shelf species on multiple occasions. In March 2019, the GAP recommended the Council prioritize revisiting NT-RCA management as part of the new Groundfish Workload and Prioritization Process.[4] In June 2019, the Council prioritized two NT-RCA measures for development: NT-RCA modifications and moving the Emley-Platt EFP into regulation. In November 2019, the Council charged the GAP with initial scoping of the prioritized groundfish management measures. The GAP presented their initial proposals to the Council in June 2020 (IR4), identifying three items for Council consideration: 1) NT-RCA and CCA area management modifications, 2) retention of incidental rockfish caught by salmon trollers while fishing in the NT-RCA, and 3) moving the Emley-Platt EFP into regulation. At their November 2020 meeting, the Council scheduled scoping of these items at their April 2021 meeting. The CCA, as noted above, was removed from consideration in this action by the Council at their Mach 2021 meeting and is planned to be a stand-alone item in the future.

2. Overarching Questions

These questions are broad and proposal-independent and are designed to explore the overarching questions common amongst all the area management proposals as the scope of this action is developed.

Is area management functioning as intended and meeting original goals and objectives? The original intent of the NT-RCA, in coordination with other management measures, was to limit non-trawl sector access, and thereby impact, to overfished groundfish species. As of 2021, yelloweye rockfish is the only groundfish species under a rebuilding plan and the 2017 stock assessment indicates are rebuilding ahead of schedule (target year of 2029). Based on initial examination of the available fishery information, it appears that these depth-based closures were effective tools and are achieving the goals and objectives set by the Council to aid in groundfish rebuilding. If the Council agrees with this cursory assessment, it could consider modifying area management measures, such as boundary line adjustments, that will allow increased access and opportunity for industry to target healthy shelf stocks. These measures could increase industry flexibility as well as maintain the Council's yelloweye rockfish conservation goals.

What is the purpose and need for this action? Purpose and need statement(s) should clearly define the problem, why action should be taken, and solution(s) to the problem. These statements are critical to shape the range of alternatives. In IR4, the GAP provided draft purpose and need statements for each of their proposals. Overall, the proposals express that existing non-trawl sector area management measures are not

[3] See 660.11(Groundfish)(7)(ii) for a complete list of shelf rockfish species.

[4] Supporting documents are found under Agenda Item G.4 March 2019

optimal in providing access to healthy stocks and are a contributing factor in hindering full attainment of multiple species. The GAP notes that improved access and opportunity may provide a wide range of benefits, including increased attainment of shelf species, a consistent market supply, and improved socioeconomic impacts.

The Council could adopt any of the proposal-specific purpose and need statements in the following sections for public review as stand-alone items or if the Council were to move forward with a consolidated action, it could adopt multiple purpose and need statements, as appropriate. If the Council finds more discussion is necessary to formulate a course of action, it could continue to scope the issue at a future meeting and adopt a purpose and need statement when appropriate.

What are the enforcement concerns with these proposals? At present, unknown. As the Council develops these proposals, recommendations and advice from the Enforcement Consultants (EC) should be solicited. Some of the proposals may have enforcement concerns that need to be addressed before the Council takes action. Early involvement by the EC will increase the efficiency and efficacy of this process and they should be briefed by appropriate parties (e.g., Staff, Groundfish Management Team [GMT], etc.) each time this item is on the Council agenda.

3. Area Modifications

This section discusses the NT-RCA boundary modification proposals for the non-trawl sector in general. We do not specify the exact depth changes the GAP provided in IR4, as those proposals may have changed since IR4 was written; however, those proposed modifications are shown in the Reference Information section at the end of this document. Links to IR4 are also provided.

Are the draft purpose and need statements clear and appropriate? The GAP's proposed draft purpose and need statement (below) focuses on modifying portions of the NT-RCA.

> "The purpose of these proposed actions is for the industry to gain access to additional fishing grounds, thereby increasing attainment of available species. The industry cited several reasons for considering – and possibly implementing – these actions: provide economic value to the fishery; reduced regulatory discards (e.g., salmon troll discards); diversify fishing strategies; reduce fishing vessels' carbon footprints; meet market supply problems; provide more stable, year-round fishing; bring financial relief to the fishermen, communities and infrastructures they support; provide better access to shelf rockfish species; disperse fishing effort targeting sablefish to avoid localized depletion of sablefish (particularly in the CCA; meet fish size demands for market; and streamline enforcement issues." *IR4,pg 2*

What are the benefits to making the boundary adjustments? Historically, shelf species supported a vibrant fishery. Seaward/shoreward boundary adjustments would increase industry access to the shelf and may provide improved opportunity to target shelf rockfish species. Modernizing area boundaries to reflect the current status of groundfish species may allow improved attainment of shelf species by the non-trawl sector. Increasing the supply and diversity of species available to the market may improve the fixed-gear industry economic conditions; however, it is unclear what the scale of benefits could be or if the benefits would be universal along the coast.

What fishery monitoring programs and data are used in managing the non-trawl fishery? Fish landing tickets are used to document landed species, Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) can be used to

track/identify vessel location, and the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) places trained biologists on vessels that target groundfish to estimate at-sea discard, amongst other duties.[5]

How would the proposed NT-RCA boundary changes affect yelloweye rockfish and cowcod?

Yelloweye Rockfish: Yelloweye rockfish habitat and distribution is primarily on the continental shelf (i.e., within the NT-RCA) on the West Coast, though they can be found outside the NT-RCA too. This species also has specific conservation areas designed to further minimize incidental catch (see §660.70). The most recent stock assessment indicated this species is recovering faster than anticipated under the current management strategy. Adjusting the boundaries may increase yelloweye bycatch and may affect the stock's recovery.

Cowcod: Though CCAs are not included as part of this action, it is important to note the highest abundance of the cowcod population is thought to be in the Southern California Bight. The NT-RCA extends into Southern California Bight; therefore, changes to the NT-RCA in this area may increase incidental cowcod catch. The most recent cowcod stock assessment indicated it was rebuilt; however, significant uncertainty remains in the estimated population's status prompting the Council's adoption of a more precautionary harvest control rule and lower ACLs. Given the low relative productivity and uncertain status of cowcod, mitigation measures have been implemented to ensure the stock is not at risk of high incidental bycatch that could jeopardize their status.

A notable concern with increased access to these areas is potential changes in discard and the corresponding mortality estimates, particularly for yelloweye and cowcod. A key to understanding this facet of the fishery has been the WCGOP. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has funded observer coverage in the LEFG and OA fisheries since the inception of the WCGOP. The WCGOP covers a randomized sample of non-trawl groundfish fishery effort and coverage is primarily focused on the primary sablefish fishery. Coverage rates and mortality estimates are detailed in Estimated Discard and Catch of Groundfish Species in the 2019 U.S. West Coast Fisheries (Agenda Item C.1.a, NWFSC Report 4, September 2020). While these data will continue to serve as the cornerstone for fishing mortality estimates and be used to assess potential area modifications, the Council may wish to consider if current monitoring is sufficient to gauge the fishery impacts as a result of any action.

In changing the boundaries, what other resources might be impacted (e.g., habitat, protected species, etc.) ? Increasing the area that the fixed-gear sector can access is likely to have some impact on habitat, though it is highly speculative to predict the amount and extent until proposals can be analyzed. Habitat impacts could vary along the coast depending based on fishing practices, intensity, etc. Further, benthic organism assemblages are likely different along the coast, suggesting differential species-level impacts by geographic location. Additionally, boundary adjustments could provide different amounts of fishable area based on location based on bottom topography, for example, in southern California, the continental shelf has a low slope and depth bins are wider; whereas in northern California the shelf has a steep shelf and the depth bins are narrower. Until a range of alternatives is determined, these impacts are highly uncertain; though may warrant an EFH review and/or Habitat Committee consideration at the appropriate time.

Based on work in Amendment 28 and in other Council documents, fixed-gear has, overall, low bottom habitat impact and the habitat appears to be resilient to these impacts, though some gear types may impact bottom habitat more than others. The Council may wish to consider these impacts by discussing actions relative to gear type (e.g., bottom contact gear vs. non-bottom contact gear).

Another concern, as with many fishing practices, is the potential interaction with protected species (e.g., mammals, birds, etc.). NMFS, through the Council's Groundfish Endangered Species Workgroup

[5] Additionally, NMFS is actively developing a fixed-gear logbook as of this writing

(GESW), provides detailed take estimates every biennium to the Council for humpback whale, eulachon, green sturgeon, humpback whale, and leatherback sea turtle.[6] The GESW meets on a biennial basis to discuss take and if additional mitigation measures, as part of the groundfish biennial process, are necessary to avoid take of these species. Additionally, NMFS provides detailed reports to the Council on salmon and seabird take in the groundfish fishery on an annual basis. The GMT also updates the Council during the groundfish inseason agenda item as to salmon landings by sector. The GESW will meet in April 2021 and provide a report to the Council at the June 2021 meeting. While this report is generally used in harvest specifications and management measure decision-making, it could provide some information useful for the NT-RCA discussions.

Does the Council have the appropriate tools to manage the non-trawl fishery inseason? The Council has the use of multiple management measures (e.g., depth-based closures, trip limits, etc.) to regulate the fixed-gear fishery via routine inseason measures. The Council may wish to revisit the tools currently available and determine if others are needed to effectively manage this fishery. The GMT and GAP should be able to brief the Council on the efficacy of existing management tools and propose new ones, as appropriate.

Instead of changing boundaries, could the NT-RCA only be accessed with specific gear types ? Stakeholders have commented to the Council that attaining the more semi-pelagic shelf rockfish species (e.g., chilipepper rockfish, yellowtail rockfish, etc.) is very desirable. As discussed below in the Emley-Platt EFP section, certain gear types are thought to selectively target midwater species while reducing incidental catch of yelloweye rockfish. However, the efficacy of these gear types to simultaneously target midwater species and avoid yelloweye should be examined to understand the potential yelloweye impacts.

Could the NT-RCA be completely reconfigured to close only those areas with high abundances of yelloweye rockfish? The majority of discussions to date have been related to shrinking the boundaries of the NT-RCA. The NT-RCA is a broad closure designed to give the maximum amount of protection to rebuilding groundfish stocks. Now that all stocks but yelloweye rockfish have been rebuilt, perhaps the NT-RCA could be reconfigured into additional discrete yelloweye RCAs This concept is the area of highest yelloweye/cowcod densities remain closed, but adjacent areas could potentially be opened. If yelloweye bycatch increases outside of a closed area, the Council could adjust management measures inseason (e.g., depth-based area closures, etc.) to close areas of higher than expected bycatch in a surgical manner. This management strategy could require a longer process to fully understand the habitat and fishery implications as well as to better understand where fixed-gear fishing effort results in unsustainable bycatch. However, we may be limited by available data to identify "hotspots" and develop new yelloweye rockfish area restrictions at this time.

4. Salmon Troll Incidental Rockfish Retention

This proposal is for commercial salmon troll fishermen to retain shelf rockfish (e.g., chilipepper, canary rockfish, widow rockfish, etc.) while fishing inside the NT-RCA (see Reference Information below). The recommendation is that no more than 50 percent of each salmon landing be rockfish. Additionally, while the proposal is to consider implementing this measure coastwide, it identifies the area south of 40° 10' N. lat. as the area of primary interest.

Should this proposal be scoped as part of the NT-RCA modification package or should it be added to the groundfish management measure project list for prioritization? In 2019, the Council adopted a new method to prioritize groundfish management measures, the workload and new management measure

[6] Agenda Item I.4.a Groundfish Endangered Species Workshop Report, June 2019

prioritization process. The Council accepts proposed management measures and then prioritizes them for action in this process. While this proposal has been presented to the Council and advisory bodies, it has not been added to list of the groundfish management measures that are in the current list. The Council may wish to consider if this proposal should be scoped as part of this process or if it should go onto the list and be considered for prioritization in light of the other competing proposals. It should be noted a similar proposal for yellowtail rockfish retention in the salmon troll fishery south of 40°10' N. lat. was adopted as part of the 2021-2022 harvest specification and management measure process.

What are the benefits to this proposal? Shelf rockfish are incidentally caught by salmon trollers in the NT-RCA. At present, salmon trollers are allowed to retain specific amounts (based on a ratio of salmon landed) of lingcod north of 40°10' N. lat and yellowtail rockfish coastwide when fishing in the NT-RCA. However, salmon trollers can retain the OA groundfish trip limits when fishing outside of the NT-RCA. Retention of incidentally caught shelf rockfish by salmon trollers may increase overall attainment of these species' allocations and provide some economic benefits to the salmon troll fishery and communities. Further, OA trip limits have been modeled and the potential impacts are understood. The GAP and salmon industry representatives should be able to further detail and discuss the merits of this proposal with the Council.

If the Council includes this proposal as part of the scope for this action, does the draft purpose and need statement clearly identify the problem and objective for this action?

The draft purpose and need focuses on retention of incidental midwater "shelf" rockfish and states:

> "The purpose for considering changing groundfish retention in the salmon troll fishery south of 40° 10' N. lat. is due, in part, to several species of rockfish being rebuilt, thereby increasing incidental take while salmon fishing. Changing the retention limits would provide additional economic benefits for salmon trollers who are trying to remain viable during a series of salmon seasons that have been limited due to poor returns. Increased retention limits of [midwater rockfish species], both when fishing inside and outside of the non-trawl RCA, will increase bycatch utilization and decrease regulatory discards. The change is needed due to retention limits that were established when several rockfish species were listed as overfished. Adjusting limits based on current, updated stock assessments that show these species are no longer overfished will provide benefits to the troll fishery and offset vessel operational costs while reducing wastage of fish." *IR4, pg. 4*

Could the retention of more groundfish species by a non-groundfish fishery impact other fixed-gear groundfish fishery sectors? At present, many groundfish annual catch limits (ACL) have an off-the-top deduction for groundfish caught in Incidental Open Access (IOA) non-groundfish fisheries, e.g., shrimp, salmon, etc. If the same process is used to set-aside a specific amount by rockfish species/complex for this measure, that amount would be deducted from the ACL and the remaining amount would be allocated to the groundfish fishery sectors. This deduction reduces the amount of potential harvest of that stock/complex by the groundfish fishery as a whole. Meaning, any IOA deduction would impact the entire groundfish fishery and not just one sector.

Until amounts, by species or complex, are proposed as part of a range of alternatives for the IOA off-the-top deduction, impacts are impossible to gauge; however, to reiterate, any amount taken off-the-top for this proposal would equate to reduction for the groundfish fishery. The GMT should be able to provide more information related to how set-asides for non-groundfish fisheries are determined.

Does this proposal promote equitable use of the resource? Under this proposal, salmon trollers would be able to retain groundfish while targeting salmon in the NT-RCA. Meaning, salmon trollers would have both access and opportunity to retain groundfish in areas where non-trawl sector is prohibited from fishing. Retention of groundfish by a non-groundfish fishery in an area where the primary user group is prohibited

could be considered an inequitable use of the resource. The Council may wish to consider whether allowing a non-groundfish fishery to retain groundfish in an area closed to a portion of the groundfish industry is an equitable use of the groundfish resource. The GAP may be able to provide their thoughts on this proposal and their potential impacts to this sector.

Does the recommendation of "50 percent of each salmon landing to be rockfish" need to be better defined? Rockfish are managed by weight and not number (*as are salmon*) and rockfish trip limits are set in pounds. This proposal notes a 50 percent rule, whereby, "*that 50 percent of each salmon landing be rockfish.*" and does not specify if this is an amount ratio (e.g., 1 rockfish per 2 salmon) or if it is pound ratio (e.g., 1 pound rockfish per 2 pounds salmon). Additionally, based on how rockfish are managed, it is likely each rockfish species this proposal designates would need a specific ratio to ensure stock status remains healthy. Meaning, for some rockfish species a 50 percent ratio (rockfish species to salmon) may be applicable but for other rockfish species a different ratio may be needed. The proposal should clarify if the ratio is meant to be a weight or a number.

Further, the proposal provides an example list of rockfish species that could be retained (see IR4 and Reference Information); however, if this proposal moves forward, selection of a specific set of rockfish eligible for retention by salmon trollers will be necessary to model impacts.

Would this fishery need to be monitored similar to the groundfish fishery? The salmon troll fishery is not observed by WCGOP. While complete landing data are recorded on fish tickets, groundfish discard remains unknown. A critical concern in the groundfish fishery is discard and that information is lacking from the salmon troll fishery. Additionally, groundfish mortality estimates from this fishery are not reported as it is not observed. It is unclear what the impact of this proposal will be at present; however, the Council may wish to consider if additional monitoring/reporting is necessary to maintain groundfish management objectives.

5. Emley-Platt Exempted Fishing Permit

The GAP and the Emley-Platt EFP's managers/participants are recommending that the fishing methods described in the Yellowtail Rockfish Jig Fishing off California EFP (i.e., the Emley-Platt EFP), be moved into regulation. This EFP has been testing a specific gear type that targets mid-water rockfish species (e.g., yellowtail rockfish, widow rockfish, etc.) while limiting catch of the overfished species (i.e., yelloweye rockfish) since 2013.

For reference, as the shelf stocks started to show improvement, the Council the Council has recommended multiple EFPs, e.g., 2013 Emley-Platt EFP, to NMFS to test different fishing strategies and gear types specifically in the closed portion of the NT-RCAs that were intended to avoid yelloweye rockfish and other overfished species.

What are the key concerns with adopting the methods of this EFP into regulation? A key concern with this EFP, like similar EFPs[7], has been participation, which historically has been low. Yet, given the 10 years the Emley-Platt EFP has been in operation, it may be possible to qualitatively, if not quantitatively, gauge the efficacy of this gear and fishing practice. Based on the most recent report from this EFP appear to show this gear type, in concert with its associated fishing method, may selectively target healthy mid-water rockfish stocks and have limited incidental yelloweye catch. However, the Council may wish to

[7] See Agenda Item F.1 Attachments 4 and 6, June 2020.

consider tasking the GMT evaluate the Emley-Platt data, as well as the other EFP data[8], to determine if the efficacy of this fishing method.

If this EFP has not demonstrated that the gear type is appropriate for targeting shelf stocks, what more is necessary to achieve that goal? At present, it is unclear what is needed to demonstrate the efficacy of this gear type. The Council may wish to consider discussing if the next step is to develop regulations based on the EFP gear/fishing practices or if more study is needed. The Council may also consider requesting NMFS West Coast Region and/or NWFSC representatives to comment on the status of the EFP.

If the NT-RCA boundaries are changed to allow more access to shelf species by LEFG/OA sectors, would it negate this proposal for inclusion into the action? The Council may wish to consider impacts related to gear type as it develops this action. Bottom contact gear (e.g., longlines, etc.) could increase yelloweye rockfish and cowcod bycatch as these species tend to be found closer to the bottom. However, if the results of the Emley-Platt EFP show promise in avoiding these species, the Council could consider this gear type as mitigation measure that could both allow fishing in new reopened areas and potentially reduce impact to yelloweye rockfish and cowcod.

Does the EFP purpose and need statement clearly identify the problem and objective of this proposal? The following purpose and need statement is from the renewal permit language as submitted at the November 2019 Council meeting as Agenda Item H.5, Attachment 5, November 2019. If the Council considers this purpose and need statement sufficient, it could be adopted and sent out for public review.

> "West Coast fisheries have been increasingly restricted in state and federal waters over the last decade to reduce impacts from fishing. Yet, demand remains for fresh, local seafood. To harvest healthy and abundant fish stocks with less impact, conservation engineering and gear experimentation is needed. The purpose of the EFP is to test the potential for a new commercial jig gear configuration to harvest currently underutilized rockfish species (yellowtail) while avoiding overfished stocks to enhance optimum yield in the mixed stock West Coast groundfish fishery." *IR4, pg. 6*

6. Process and Workload Questions for Groundfish Area Management Modifications

If the Council initiated work on this action, how many meetings would be required and what timeline would be needed given workload considerations? It is highly speculative to predict the course of this action as it is early in the process. The Council will need to determine the scope first. After which, a range of alternatives will need to be developed and associated analyses completed. The April 2021 Council meeting will be the first opportunity the Council has to scope this item. The Council is not limited to a single scoping and could continue the development process of this action with advisory bodies and stakeholders, as appropriate. Additionally, NMFS has indicated they have a low threshold for work at present due to staffing issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other commitments. This caveat is noted as NMFS staff are integral to the completion of this action.

Do all area modification proposals need to move forward in one regulatory package? The GAP presented multiple proposals in their IR4 report. All these items could be incorporated into one large NT-RCA rule-making package; however, the Council could separate these proposals into multiple actions, as appropriate, for efficient implementation.

[8] *Id.*

Would prioritizing a subset of the proposed modifications provide desired effects to the industry in the near-term? Given the multiple proposals, the Council could consider giving guidance regarding the criteria to be used to determine which proposal(s) provide the most overall benefit to industry and task the GAP to create a rank-based proposal list.

Do any of these proposals have a place in the groundfish harvest specifications and management measure process? The next groundfish biennial harvest specifications and management measures process for the 2023-2024 cycle begins in June of 2021. The Council has included minor NT-RCA boundary changes and waypoint corrections in this process previously, for example, revisions to NT-RCA boundaries were included in the 2021-2022 biennial management measures It is important to note due to the complexity and workload associated with this biennial process, additional "new" management measures has the potential to delay the targeted implementation date of January 1.

7. Reference Information

NT-RCA Boundary Modifications

The GAP proposal includes modifications to both the seaward and shoreward NT-RCA boundaries. Table 1 shows the current seaward and shoreward boundaries as described in 2021-2022 groundfish harvest specifications and management measure action. The GAP's proposed changes to the NT-RCA are shown in Table 2. Note this table excludes modifications listed in IR4 that were completed as part of the 2021-2022 groundfish harvest specification and management measure process.

Table 1. Current shoreward and seaward boundaries for the non-trawl rockfish conservation area along the West Coast (source 86 FR 14379, Table 2 and 3)

Area	Shoreward (fm)	Seaward (fm)
Washington to Oregon	0 (shoreline)	100
46°16' N. lat. to 40°10' N. lat [a/]	30	40
	40	100
40°10' N. lat. to 38°57' N. lat.	40	125
38°57' N. lat. to 34°27' N. lat.	50	125
South of 34°27' N. lat.[b/]	100	150

a/ between 46°16 N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat., 30 to 40 fm fishing is only allowed with hook and line gear except bottom longline and dinglebar (§660.11)
b/ also applies around islands

Table 2. Groundfish Advisory Subpanel proposed Informational Report 4 non-trawl rockfish conservation area (NT-RCA) boundary changes not completed under 2021-2022 groundfish harvest specifications and management measure process compared to 2021 NT-RCA boundaries.

#	IR4 Proposed Boundaries	2021 Shoreward/Seaward Boundaries a/
1	Set NT-RCA boundaries at 60 fm shoreward and 80 fm seaward between 40°10' N. lat. and 34°27' N. lat.	40°10 N. lat. - 38°57.5 N. lat. ● 40 fm and 125 fm 38°57.5 N. lat. 34°27 N. lat. ● 50 fm and 125 fm
2	Set NT-RCA boundaries at 40 fm shoreward and 80 fm seaward between 46° 16' and 40°10' N. lat.	46°16' N. lat. to 40°10' N. lat. ● 40 fm and 100 fm b/
3	Narrow the (NT) RCA off California to 70 fm shoreward boundary and 100 fm seaward boundary (statewide).	California NT-RCA Boundaries: ● 46°16' N. lat. to 40°10' N. lat.: b/, c/ ○ 40 fm and 100 fm ● 40°10' N. lat. - 34°57.5' N. lat.: ○ 40 fm and 125 fm ● 38°57.5' N. lat. to 34°27' N. lat.: ○ 50 fm and 125 fm ● South of 34°27' N. lat.: d/ ○ 100 fm and 150 fm

a/Current NT-RCA boundaries at 86 FR 14379, Tables 2 & 3 -coordinates at §§ 660.71-660.74
b/ between 46°16 N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat., 30 to 40 fm fishing is only allowed with hook and line gear except bottom longline and dinglebar (§660.11)
c/this geographic range includes Oregon
d/ also applies around islands

Incidental Groundfish Retention in the Salmon Troll Fishery

Table 3. Proposal to allow incidental retention of midwater rockfish species in the salmon troll fishery when inside the NT-RCA boundaries. (Source, Informational Report 4, June 2020).

Area	Proposal
South of 40° 10′ N. lat.	Allow retention of incidental catches of midwater rockfishes (i.e., yellowtail, chilipepper, vermilion, canary, widow, and bocaccio) in the non-trawl RCA throughout the entire coast; focus south of 40° 10′ N. lat.; recommend that 50 percent of each salmon landing be rockfish.

Emley-Platt EFP -summary information

The Yellowtail Rockfish Jig Fishing Off California (Emley-Platt) EFP is testing the use of "commercial jig gear configuration to harvest currently underutilized rockfish species (yellowtail) while avoiding overfished stocks to enhance optimum yield in the mixed stock West Coast groundfish fishery" within the Non-trawl RCA in areas off California under 100 percent observer coverage. The long-term goal of this EFP is to allow, in regulation, commercial jig fishing with this gear off the entire West Coast, including in the Non-trawl RCAs, by the OA and Limited Entry fixed-gear participants. If successful, this gear could also be used by the nearshore fleet to avoid species of concern and could create a fishery that would fill out the portfolios of those who make up the bulk of the fishermen in the West Coast's coastal communities.

PFMC
03/23/21