

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS – FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discussed the current status of groundfish fisheries and the need for any inseason adjustments during the March 2021 meeting. The GMT did not receive any requests for inseason changes at this meeting. Instead, we provide the summary information below on the Pacific coast groundfish fishery performance in 2020 and performance to date for 2021.

2020 Groundfish Fisheries

Overall Annual Catch Limit Attainments

We saw lower projected attainment for a majority of the stocks and stock complexes in 2020 than in previous years, due to sectors being unable to utilize their allocations. However, there were a few stocks that had similar or higher attainment than in previous years. The preliminary Pacific Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN) estimates show yellowtail rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat. maintained a similar attainment level with 59 percent (3,692 mt) in 2019 to 61 percent (3,675.5 mt) in 2020, largely due to midwater trawl fleet effort. Attainment of chilipepper rockfish south of 40° 10' N. lat. increased from 16 percent in 2019 (397.5 mt) to 25 percent in 2020 (612 mt), with most catch occurring in the bottom trawl fleet. Additional fishery performance is discussed below.

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 1). Overall catch of Chinook salmon in all groundfish fisheries was 4,133 fish, or 21 percent of the 20,000 Chinook salmon threshold.

Table 1. Chinook salmon sector thresholds and catch (as of March 5, 2021) for 2020 groundfish fisheries. (Source: PacFIN IFQ021 Combined Sector Salmon Bycatch ESA Report)

Sector	Sub-Sector	Catch To Date	Threshold	% of Threshold
Whiting	CP	668	11,000	22%
	MS	67		
	Shoreside	1,724		
	Tribal	8 a/		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>2,467</i>		
Non-Whiting	Bottom Trawl	481	5,500	19%
	Midwater Trawl	72		
	Tribal	6 a/		
	Fixed Gear	500 b/		
	WA Rec			
	OR Rec + longleader			
	CA Rec			
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,078</i>			
Reserve	--	3,500		
All groundfish fisheries		3,526	20,000	18%

a/ End-of-year estimate from NWIFC.

b/ GMT proposed assumption of annual mortality, which assumed maximum historical mortality (154) plus a 250 fish buffer from the 2017 Biological Opinion (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.

Shortbelly Rockfish Scorecard

As per the request of the Council, the GMT provides the estimated mortality of shortbelly rockfish by sector in Table 2, which shows that 606.4 mt (20.2 percent) of the 3,000 mt shortbelly rockfish annual catch limit was taken in 2020.

Table 2. Estimated 2020 mortality of shortbelly rockfish by sector. (Source: PacFIN)

Sector	Estimated Mortality (mt)
At-Sea Hake Catcher Processor	2.9
At-Sea Hake Mothership	29.8
IFQ	186.7
Incidental/Miscellaneous	*
Shoreside Hake	378.4
Treaty	*
Total	606.4

* indicates confidential data

Trawl Fishery Performance

The non-whiting mid-water trawl rockfish fishery are projected to have continued high attainments of widow and yellowtail rockfishes in 2020; however, annual ex-vessel revenues from each stock were down approximately 31 percent and 35 percent compared to 2019, respectively.

No set-asides were exceeded in the at-sea whiting fisheries in 2020. The GMT notes that exceedance of a set-aside does not require Council or National Marine Fisheries Service action, and that full reports on the catch of non-whiting species in the at-sea whiting fishery can be viewed on [PacFIN APEX Reporting System](#).

Non-Trawl Fishery Performance

Sablefish Tier Fishery N. of 36° N. lat.

As part of the information provided to the Council at the September and November 2020 meetings for the emergency rule to extend the Sablefish Tier fishery through the end of 2020, the GMT provided a table showing the number of vessels in the Sablefish Tier Fishery achieving a given percent attainment of their tiers ([Agenda Item D.7.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, September 2020](#), [Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, November 2020](#)). Below, the GMT provides an update to the table included in the September and November 2020 statement (Table 3). The extension of the Sablefish Tier fishery season allowed for 29 more vessels to utilize their tier limits, and 16 of those vessels were able to attain 99-100 percent of their tier limits.

Table 3. Updated Sablefish Tier fishery data, Number of vessels achieving given percent attainment of tiers. Data are through December 31, 2020 and are derived from the [PacFIN APEX Reporting System](#).

Percent Attainment (%)	Number of vessels			
	Thru mid Sept. (from D.7.a, Supp. GMT Rpt, Sept 2020)	Thru Oct 31	Thru Nov 17	Thru Dec 31
99-100	18	30	32	46
90-98	2	5	5	5
80-89	2	1	1	4
70-79	3	3	3	2
60-69	1	3	2	1
50-59	3	2	2	--
<50	24	23	26	38
Grand Total	53	67	71	96

Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access

Despite the effects of COVID-19 on the overall groundfish fishery, landings of some rockfish stocks and stock complexes were higher than in previous years: bocaccio south of 40° 10' N. Lat., chilipepper south of 40° 10' N. Lat., canary rockfish, shelf rockfish north and south of 40° 10' N. Lat., and widow rockfish. At this time, it is unclear if the increases are due to higher effort in the

fixed gear fleet, higher trip limits, and/or the expansion or development of niche markets in 2020 (e.g., community supported fisheries).

Recreational Fisheries

Washington

The Washington recreational bottomfish fishery was unique in 2020 due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Two of the main outer coastal access sites, Neah Bay and La Push, closed in March and remain closed to this date. Without the ability to launch from these northern sites, angler participation was notably down in adjacent marine areas. However, in the southern ports of Westport and Ilwaco, angler participation tracked closely to average despite the pandemic.

Progress toward the harvest guidelines throughout the season did not trigger any management concerns or action. With the continued closure of access to Neah Bay, the 2021 season may be similar to 2020's lower than average angler participation again in the northern marine areas.

Oregon

The Oregon recreational bottomfish fishery finished 2020 with the third highest number of angler trips on record, with just over 103,000 trips. The number of charter trips was down in 2020 due to COVID-19 related closures and restrictions. There was an increase in private angler trips in 2020, as many people turned to outdoor recreational activities as the summer progressed and indoor activities remaining closed or restricted.

The state-specified harvest guideline for nearshore rockfish complex species (China, copper, and quillback rockfishes) was reached in mid-July, and retention was prohibited. Similarly, the state-specified cabezon harvest guideline was approached in mid-August and retention was prohibited. At the time of the nearshore rockfish prohibition, black, blue, deacon, and canary rockfishes landings were tracking low, as was bycatch mortality of yelloweye rockfish; therefore, the daily general marine bag limit was able to be increased in state regulations from five to seven fish (ten fish in Federal regulation). With the exception of nearshore rockfish, the total mortality of all species was below the harvest guidelines or limits. Nearshore rockfish exceeded the state-specified Oregon recreational harvest guideline by approximately 1 mt, due to higher than projected discard mortality and illegal landings in August and September.

California

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) submitted an informational report ([Agenda Item G.4.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1](#)) on the 2020 recreational fishery performance. There were no inseason management actions taken during 2020 and no harvest targets were exceeded. While access to some ports were limited during a portion of the year, all areas were open by mid-summer.

2021 Groundfish Fisheries

Sablefish Daily Trip Limits

At the November 2020 Council meeting, the GMT provided 2021 landings projections for the sablefish daily trip limit (DTL) fishery ([Agenda Item G.3.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, November 2020](#)) under the trip limits ultimately recommended by the Council. Considering that

it is still early in the 2021 season and the small amount of data on 2021 landings-to-date are not expected to result in any significant change in the annual projections, the GMT did not see a need to re-run the model and again provides the projections that were run in November 2020 with their respective 2021 landing targets (Table 4).

The GMT can provide updated DTL projections at the April 2021 meeting.

Table 4. Sablefish DTL projected landings, landing targets, and percent attainment for 2021.

Sector	Projected Landings (round weight mt)	Landing Target (mt)	Attainment (%)
LEN	265 - 369	336	79% - 110%
OAN	421 - 514	553	76% - 93%
LES	480 - 586	601	80% - 98%
OAS	8.8 - 14.7	435	2% - 3%

Chinook Salmon Scorecard

Table 5 shows Chinook salmon catches as of March 5, 2021 in relation to the sector thresholds.

Table 5. Chinook salmon catch in 2021 as of March 5, 2021 in relation to the sector thresholds (Source =PacFIN IFQ521 Combined Sector Salmon Bycatch ESA Report).

Sector	Sub-Sector	Catch To Date	Threshold	% of Threshold
Whiting	CP	0	11,000	5
	MS	0		
	Shoreside	0		
	Tribal	560 a/		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>560</i>		
Non-Whiting	Bottom Trawl	131	5,500	12
	Midwater Trawl	13		
	Tribal	25 a/		
	Fixed Gear	500 a/		
	WA Rec			
	OR Rec + longleader			
	CA Rec			
<i>Total</i>	<i>644</i>			
Reserve		3,500		
All groundfish fisheries		1,204	20,000	6

a/ Current year tribal landings are estimated as the maximum of the historic landings for the last 5 years.

b/ GMT proposed assumption of annual 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.

While non-whiting fleet bycatch is low compared to thresholds, the bottom trawl fleet’s catch is relatively high for this early in the season and comprises ~34 percent of the most recent five-year average. The GMT will continue to update the Council at future meetings and the inseason PacFIN scorecard is publicly available.

Shortbelly Rockfish Scorecard

Table 6 shows that 1.1 mt of shortbelly rockfish has been taken as of March 5, 2021. (Source PacFIN).

Table 6. Estimated mortality of shortbelly rockfish by sector, as of March 5, 2021

Sector	Estimated Mortality (mt)
At-Sea Hake Catcher Processor	-
At-Sea Hake Mothership	-
IFQ	1.1
Incidental/Miscellaneous	-
Shoreside Hake	-
Treaty	-
Total	1.1

Rebuilding Species Scorecard

Attachment 1 shows the updated 2021 rebuilding species scorecard for yelloweye rockfish. Based on information presented at the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) annual meeting, IPHC will not be conducting the full Area 2A survey in 2021. A subset of stations will be sampled. It is unknown at this time how the change in survey design will impact yelloweye rockfish. The impacts will likely be lower than if the full survey was conducted. However, the GMT has left the 1.1 mt set-aside for that survey as a placeholder in rebuilding species scorecard. The Oregon recreational projected impacts have been updated, based on updated modeling projections for 2021, using full year 2020 data. There are no further updates since November 2020, and all fisheries are projected to be within their allocations, harvest guidelines, annual catch targets, and shares.

PFMC
03/08/21

Attachment 1. Allocations^a and projected mortality impacts (mt) of yelloweye rockfish as adopted for 2021.

Fishery	Yelloweye		
	HG Allocations a/	ACT Allocations a/	Projected Impacts f/
<i>Date: March 8, 2021</i>			
Off the Top Deductions	8.85	8.85	16.0
EFP b/	0.24	0.24	0.02
Research c/	2.9	2.92	2.9
Incidental OA d/	0.69	0.69	8.04
Tribal e/	5.0	5.0	5.0
Bottom Trawl			0.0
Troll			0.0
Fixed gear	5.0	5.0	5.0
mid-water			0.0
whiting			
Trawl Allocations	3.3	3.3	0.6
-SB Trawl	3.3	3.3	0.6
-At-Sea Trawl	0.0		0.0
a) At-sea whiting MS			
b) At-sea whiting CP			
Non-Trawl Allocation	37.9	29.5	23.6
Non-Nearshore			
LE FG	7.8	6.2	3.9
OA FG			
Directed OA: Nearshore			
Recreational Groundfish			
WA	9.7	7.5	5.7
OR	8.8	6.9	5.5
CA	11.4	8.9	8.5
TOTAL	50.1	41.7	40.2
Harvest Specification	50	41.7	41.7
Difference	0.0	0.1	1.5
Percent of ACL	100.1%	99.9%	96.4%
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 2021-2022 EIS process, 4) HG for the recreational fisheries for yellow eye 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 2021-2022 Environmental Impact Statement, which are currently specified in regulation.

e/ Tribal values in the allocation column represent the values in regulation. Projected impacts are the tribes best estimate of catch.

f/ taken from Agenda Item F.1.Attachment 8, June 2020, draft analytical document