

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON STANDARDIZED BYCATCH REPORTING METHODOLOGY

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received an overview of this agenda item from Mr. Brett Wiedoff of Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff on our June 10th webinar and reviewed the materials in the briefing book and our previous report. The GMT agrees with the conclusions found in [Agenda Item C.2, Attachment 2, June 2021](#), that the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) does not need to be amended at this time to be consistent with the National Marine Fisheries Service final rule ([82 FR 6317, January 19 2017](#)). We offer the following points for consideration.

Recreational Fisheries Estimation Methods

There are some minor updates that need to be made to language within the FMP concerning how catch and bycatch estimates are made in the recreational fisheries. The FMP currently states that the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistic Service (MRFSS) is the program that makes estimates for the recreational fisheries. The MRFSS estimates should no longer be considered the main source of information since standardized state sampling programs and methodologies are now used. The details of the state data collection methods are provided in external documents, helpfully linked in Attachment 2. However, uncertainty around the estimates produced by the state sampling programs is not currently described in the FMP, and it is unclear if the FMP needs to describe this information. Some discussion of variance in the data is provided in the state sampling methodologies, but it is unclear if the FMP needs to be updated or amended to contain that information as well. In the interim, the GMT believes the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document could be updated, in the time frame necessary, to reflect the current process for estimating recreational fishery bycatch information, referencing where to find the state methodologies, and adding some qualitative discussions on the uncertainty of the bycatch estimates. At the time the FMP is next updated/amended for other purposes, updated recreational estimation methods could then be incorporated (e.g., 2023-24 biennial harvest specifications, if it would not slow down that process).

Commercial Fisheries

Similar to the recreational section, this section could be updated, including removing references to the Pacific Fisheries Information Network Quota Species Monitoring report which is no longer used, adding information about e-tickets, and updating logbook information. Similarly, language needs to be updated to correctly describe observer coverage and electronic monitoring and how the data are used for total catch and mortality estimates. The GMT does not think this warrants an amendment to the FMP at this time but should be updated whenever the FMP is next amended, similar to the recreational section. The GMT is willing to help Council staff with providing the current information via the SAFE document or some other source, as needed.

Groundfish Catch/Mortality in Other FMPs

The GMT discussed that bycatch of groundfish stocks may occur in other Council FMPs, which would benefit from further discussion on existing Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodologies (SBRMs) and how there is room for better understanding of impacts when fishing overlaps multiple FMPs. This would be valuable because in the groundfish biennial harvest specifications

process, anticipated impacts from non-groundfish fisheries are included in the incidental open access fishery set aside, and deducted off the top, before establishing the fishery harvest guideline and subsequent allocations to directed recreational and commercial groundfish fisheries. Improving accuracy of these estimates helps utilize the resources while ensuring mortality remains within management limits.

For example, some groundfish are caught in salmon troll fisheries, though the GMT is not aware of documentation of that groundfish bycatch. The salmon troll fishery is not currently monitored by either at-sea observers or electronic monitoring systems, and thus no estimates of groundfish discards/discard mortality are currently available. **The GMT recommends that discussions continue regarding SBRM of groundfish bycatch in non-groundfish fisheries managed through the Council process.** The GMT is available to assist Council staff or advisory bodies in examining and updating existing analyses and methodologies about the impacts of those fisheries to groundfish stocks.

PFMC
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