GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS – FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discussed the current status of groundfish fisheries, requests from industry, and any needs for inseason adjustments during the September 2021 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting. **The GMT requests that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implement all action items in this report in the most expedient manner possible, recognizing that any Emergency Rule may ultimately take precedence over inseason action.**

Action Items

Sablefish Daily Trip Limit (DTL)

Limited Entry Fixed Gear North of 36° N lat. (LEN)

2021 sablefish prices in the LEN sector of the DTL fishery show a similar trend to those of 2020, generally remaining below $2.50 per pound (***Figure 1***). Landings in 2021 for the sector are trending slightly higher than 2020 and similarly to the 2019 landings trend. The GMT projected LEN landings for 2021 under a low, average, and high price scenario. Actual landings through August 31, 2021, have been about 56 percent of the average price scenario projections and about 83 percent of the low price scenario projections. Thus, the GMT provides projections under both the low and average price scenarios in Table 1 below.

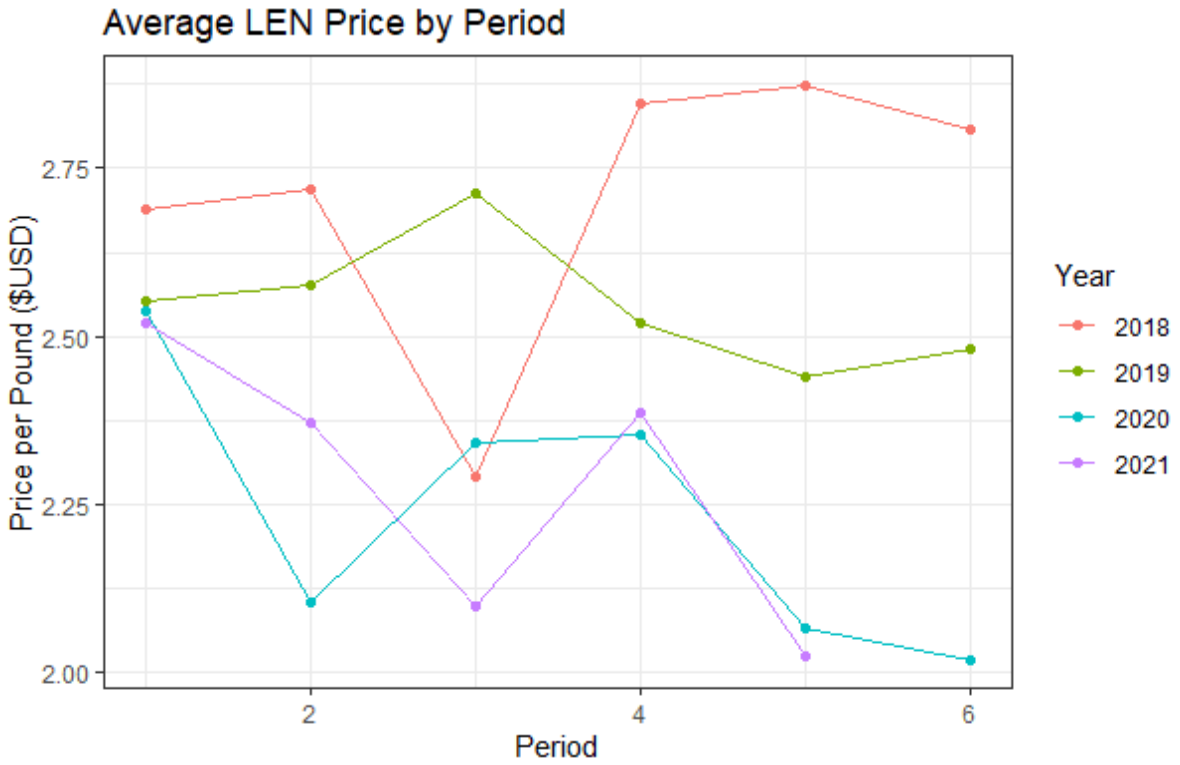

Figure 1. Average LEN price per pound by period and year. Prices are adjusted for inflation.

Status quo and proposed LEN trip limits are provided in ***Table 1*** with associated low and high projections and percent attainment of the landed catch share. Projected cumulative landings in ***Table 1*** and ***Figure 2*** are a combination of actual landings for January 1 through August 31 and projected landings for September 1 through December 31. Given that projections under both price scenarios are likely overestimates and both remain below the landed catch share, **the GMT recommends that the Council select Option 2 (4,500 lbs./week not to exceed 9,000 lbs./2 months) for the LEN sector, to be implemented as soon as possible through the end of the year.**

Table 1. Options for trip limit increases in the LEN sector.

Option	Trip Limit	Projected Landings (rd. wt. mt) under Two Price Scenarios		Landed Catch Share (mt)	Attainment (percent)	
		Low	Average		Low	Average
SQ	1,700 lbs./week not to exceed 5,100 lbs./2 months	180	197	336	54	59
1	2,500 lbs./week not to exceed 7,500 lbs./2 months	241	265		72	79
2	**4,500 lbs./week not to exceed 9,000 lbs./2 months**	**290**	**320**		**86**	**95**

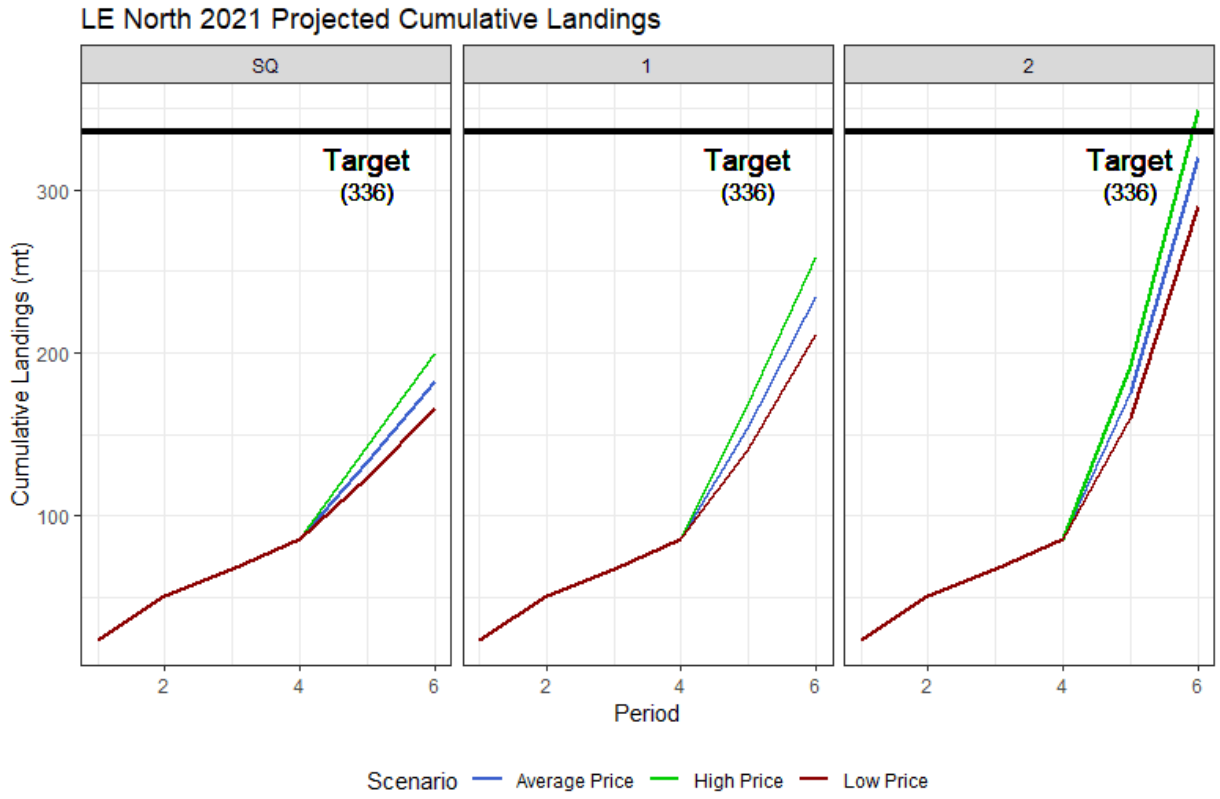

Figure 2. 2021 cumulative projected landings for the LEN sector of the sablefish DTL fishery under three price scenarios for each of the three trip limit options represented as separate panels (SQ, 1, 2).

Open Access North of 36° N lat. (OAN)

2021 sablefish prices in the OAN sector of the DTL fishery show a similar trend to those of 2020, with both years exhibiting a significant dip in period 4 (July and August) compared to other periods (***Figure 3***). Landings in 2021 for the sector are trending slightly higher than 2020 and similarly to the 2019 landings trend. The GMT projected OAN landings for 2021 under a low, average, and high price scenario. Actual landings through August 31 have been about 67 percent of the average price scenario projections and about 89 percent of the low-price scenario projections. Thus, the GMT provides projections under both the low and average price scenarios in Table 2 below.

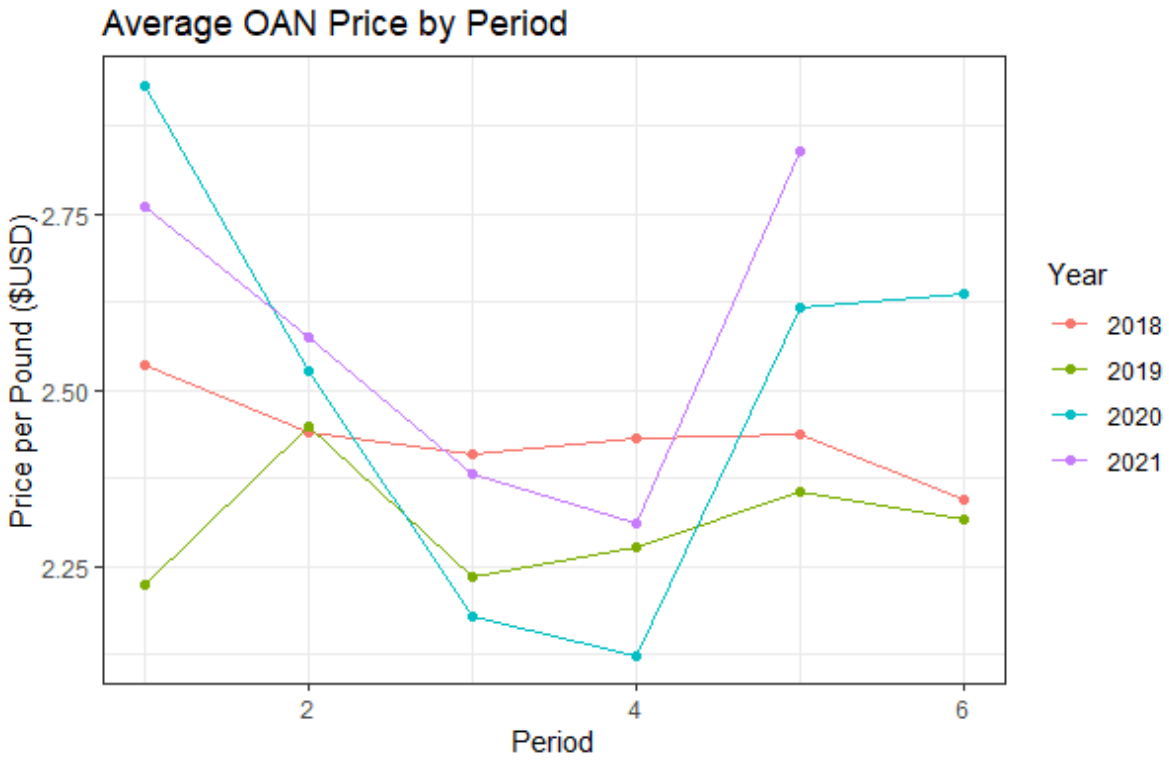

Figure 3. Average OAN price per pound by period and year. Prices are adjusted for inflation.

Status quo and proposed OAN trip limits are provided in ***Table 2*** with associated low and high projections and percent attainment of the landed catch share. Projected cumulative landings in Table 2 and ***Figure 4*** are a combination of actual landings for January 1 through August 31 and projected landings for September 1 through December 31. **The GMT recommends that the Council select Option 1 (600 lbs. daily, or 1 landing per week up to 3,000 lbs., not to exceed 6,000 lbs./2 months) for the OAN sector, to be implemented as soon as possible through the end of the year.**

Table 2. Options for trip limit increases in the OAN sector.

Option	Trip Limit	Projected Landings (rd. wt. mt) under Two Price Scenarios		Landed Catch Share (mt)	Attainment (percent)	
		Low	Average		Low	Average
SQ	600 lbs. daily, or 1 landing per week up to 2,000 lbs., not to exceed 4,000 lbs./2 months	291	331	**553**	53	60
1	**600 lbs. daily, or 1 landing per week up to 3,000 lbs., not to exceed 6,000 lbs./2 months**	**315**	**363**		**57**	**66**

Figure 4. 2021 cumulative projected landings for the OAN sector of the sablefish DTL fishery under three price scenarios for each of the three trip limit options represented as separate panels (SQ, 1, 2).

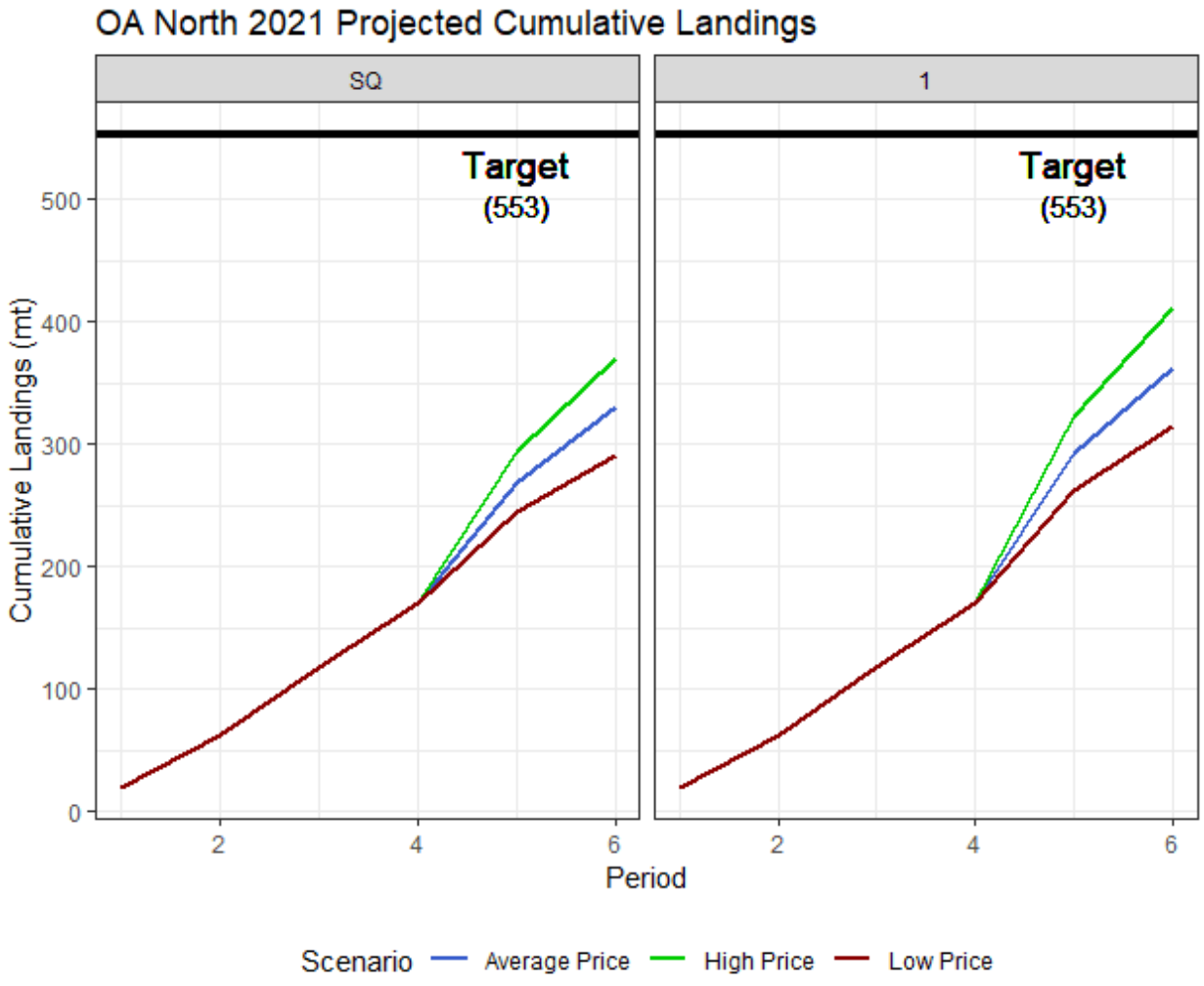

Figure 5. 2021 cumulative projected landings for the OAN sector of the sablefish DTL fishery under three price scenarios for each of the three trip limit options represented as separate panels (SQ, 1, 2).

Lingcod LE/OA North of 42° N Lat.

A request for increased lingcod take in the limited entry fixed gear fishery north of 42° N lat. was made due to the entirety of the 4,000 lbs. trip limit being landed within the first two weeks of a trip limit period. Status quo is currently resulting in regulatory discard. We modeled raising the lingcod trip limit by 1,000 lbs. per 2 months for limited entry and 500 lbs. per month for open access (Table 3). There are minimal differences in projected landings as well as estimated encounters of yelloweye rockfish (~0.01 mt increase for the remainder of 2021; Table 4). Therefore, **the GMT recommends Option 1 (implementation as soon as possible) because the increase in lingcod is expected to reduce regulatory discard and provide additional opportunity for some industry members already in the fishery.** The GMT believes that 1,000 extra pounds in a two-month period is less likely to entice new effort than raising the limit higher, which will help minimize increased targeting of lingcod and associated yelloweye rockfish bycatch.

Table 3. Status Quo and Alternative Trip Limit Options for Lingcod North of 42° N lat.

Option	Sector	Area	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct*	Nov-Dec
Status Quo	LE	N of 42°	4,000 lbs. / 2 months					
	OA	N of 42°	2,000 lbs. / month					
Option 1	LE	N of 42°	4,000 lbs. / 2 months				5,000 lbs. / 2 months	
	OA	N of 42°	2,000 lbs. / month				2,500 lbs. / month	

*Increases are recommended to be implemented as soon as possible, however; they will not be in effect until NMFS publishes the inseason action in the *Federal Register*. If that happens before October 31, Period 5 2-month limits would increase

Table 4. Projected impacts compared to the non-trawl allocation for Lingcod North of 42° N lat.

Option	Sector	Area	Mortality Estimate (mt)	LE + OA (mt)	Non-Trawl Allocation (mt)	% Non-Trawl Allocation
Status Quo	LE	North of 40° 10′ N lat.	31.8	131.4	2,799.8	4.7%
	OA		99.6			
Option 1*	LE		32.7	132.8	2,799.8	4.7%
	OA		100.2			

*Projections assume trip limit increase is effective October 1. The later it is implemented the lower the projected impacts will be.

Informational Items

2021 landings and prices in the Limited Entry Fixed Gear sector south of 36° N lat. (LES) of the DTL fishery through period 4 are generally tracking lower than those during the same time in 2020, and the sector is projected to land 160.3 mt (26.7 percent) of its 601 mt landed catch share under an average price scenario, making this amount a likely overestimation (Table 5). The GMT

consulted LES sector participants to determine whether adjustments to the LES trip limits would provide additional opportunity for sector attainment, but industry representatives commented that the poor market conditions in Southern California would not benefit from higher trip limits. The Open Access sector south of 36° N lat. (OAS) is experiencing slightly higher participation this year than the previous two years, but landings are still low at less than two percent (8.5 mt) of the 435 mt OA landed catch share (Table 6).

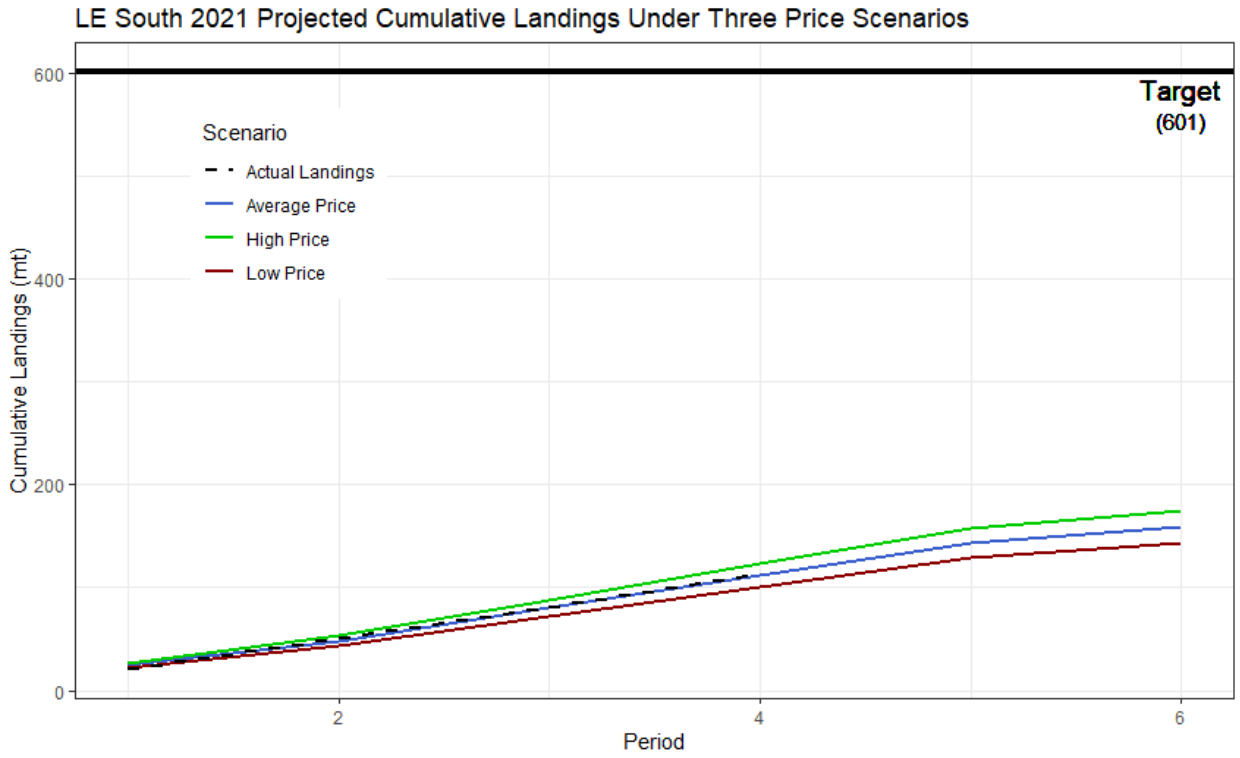

Figure 6. 2021 Cumulative Landings Projections for the LES Sablefish DTL sector.

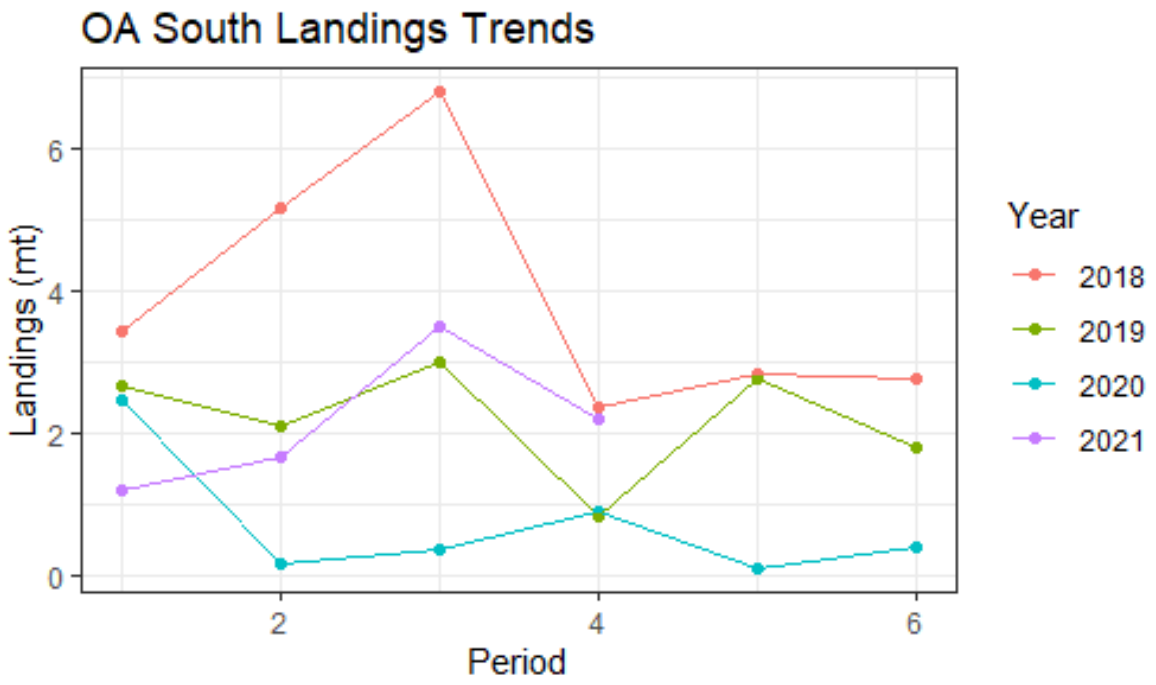

Figure 7. Annual landings trends by period since 2018 for the OAS Sablefish DTL sector.

Chinook Salmon Scorecard

Table 5 shows Chinook salmon catches from groundfish fisheries and exempted fishing permits (EFPs) as of September 13, 2021, in relation to the sector thresholds. Table 6 shows the breakdown of catches from the EFPs.

Table 5. Chinook salmon catch (individuals) in 2021 as of Sept 13, 2021 in relation to the sector thresholds (Source =PacFIN IFQ521 Combined Sector Salmon Bycatch ESA Report).

Sector[a/]	Sub-Sector	Catch To Date	% of Threshold	Total Threshold
Whiting	CP	60	0.5%	**11,000**
	MS	41	0.4%	
	Shoreside	376	3.4%	
	Tribal	560 b/	5.1%	
	Total	***1,037***	**9.4%**	
Non-Whiting	Bottom Trawl	318	5.8%	**5,500**
	Midwater Trawl	29	0.5%	
	Tribal	25 b/	0.5%	
	Fixed Gear	500 c/	9.1%	
	WA Rec			
	OR Rec + longleader			
	CA Rec			
	Total	***872***	**15.9%**	

All groundfish fisheries & EFPs		[redacted]

a/ There is a reserve of 3,500 fish, in addition to the number of fish in the whiting and non-whiting thresholds.
b/ Current year tribal landings are estimated as the maximum of the historic landings for the last 5 years.
c/ 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.

Table 6. Chinook and coho salmon catch in 2021 EFPs (Source: NMFS WCR on Aug 24, 2021). These EFP values are included in the sector totals in Table 5 above.

Gear	Region	Vessels	Trips	Chinook Count	Unid Salmon Count	Coho Count	Groundfish Weight (lbs.)	Groundfish Revenue
Midwater Trawl	N & S of 42°N lat. combined a/	13	143	28	0	3	15,728,637	$3,024,011

a/ Due to the limited number of participants in one area, both north and south of 42° N. lat. are combined to retain confidentiality.

Shortbelly Rockfish Scorecard

Table 7 estimates that 246.1 mt of shortbelly rockfish has been taken as of September 13, 2021. Even though the data is publicly available online (Report GMT007 on the PacFIN Reports Dashboard), the GMT is including the below table summarizing mortality by sector to date in our inseason report, as requested by the Council.

Table 7. Estimated mortality of shortbelly rockfish by sector, as of Sept 13, 2021. (Source PacFIN Report GMT007).

Sector	Estimated Mortality (mt)
At-Sea Hake Catcher Processor	*
At-Sea Hake Mothership	54.5
IFQ	22.4
Incidental/Miscellaneous	*
Shoreside Hake	160.6
Treaty	*
Total	**246.1**

* Indicates confidential

Rebuilding Species Scorecard

Table ***A- 1*** in Appendix 1 shows the updated 2021 rebuilding species scorecard for yelloweye rockfish.

The International Pacific Halibut Commission has concluded their annual longline survey that informs the annual Pacific halibut stock assessment off the U.S. West Coast. Total yelloweye rockfish impacts were 0.71 mt, out of 1.1 mt set-aside for that survey. Therefore, 0.39 mt of yelloweye rockfish have been returned to the scorecard (Table ***A- 1***).

The annual groundfish mortality report produced by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP; Agenda Item C.1.b, NMFS Report 1, September 2021) shows that in 2020 the estimated yelloweye rockfish impacts from the directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery were 2.62 mt (Table 2 in that report). The report does note that due to COVID-19 issues the first two directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery openings were not observed, only the third opening was observed, at a low level (~3 percent). The 2019 WCGOP mortality report (Agenda Item C.1.a, NWFSC Report 3, September 2020) estimated impacts from the directed Pacific halibut fishery to be 7.42 mt of yelloweye rockfish mortality. The GMT has been using 7.42 mt as the projected impacts from the directed Pacific halibut fishery in the Rebuilding Species Scorecard. The GMT notes that the directed Pacific halibut commercial fishery changed from 10-hour openings to 58-hour openings beginning in 2020 and continuing into 2021. With only one year of data from this extended duration of the fishery, and uncertainty in the future prosecution of the fishery, **the GMT recommends using an average of the years with observer data (2017-2020; 2.66 mt) as the projected impacts on yelloweye rockfish mortality from the Pacific halibut fishery for 2021**. Unless new data emerges, the GMT will use this same value for the set-aside for the 2023-24 biennial harvest specifications and management measures calculations.

Summary of Recommendations

The GMT recommends the Council adopt:

1. **Option 2 (4,500 lbs./week not to exceed 9,000 lbs./2 months) for the LEN sector of the sablefish DTL fishery, to be implemented as soon as possible through the end of the year.**
2. **Option 1 (600 lbs. daily, or 1 landing per week up to 3,000 lbs., not to exceed 6,000 lbs./2 months) for the OAN sector of the sablefish DTL fishery, to be implemented as soon as possible through the end of the year.**
3. **Option 1 for lingcod trip limits in the LE/OA sectors North of 42° N Lat.**
4. **Using an average of the years with observer data (2017-2020; 2.66 mt) as the projected impacts on yelloweye rockfish mortality from the Pacific halibut fishery for 2021.**

PFMC
09/14/21

Appendix 1. Rebuilding Species Scorecard

Table A- 1. Allocations[a] and projected mortality impacts (mt) of yelloweye rockfish as adopted for 2021.

Fishery		Yelloweye		
Date: September 2021		**HG Allocations a/**	**ACT Allocations a/**	**Projected Impacts f/**
Off the Top Deductions		8.85	8.85	**7.1**
EFP b/		0.24	0.24	0.02
Research c/		2.9	2.92	**2.5**
Incidental OA d/		0.69	0.69	**3.28**
Tribal e/		5.0	5.0	**1.3**
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		7.8	6.2	3.9
LE FG				
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	**31.4**
Harvest Specification		**50**	**41.7**	**41.7**
Difference		0.0	0.1	**10.4**
Percent of ACL		100.1%	99.9%	75.2%
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 2021-2022 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 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