

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2023-24 MANAGEMENT

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the draft harvest specifications, received an overview from Mr. Todd Phillips of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, and provides comments below. We have begun to develop a list of potential management measures for 2023-24, which are discussed in Supplemental GMT Report 3 ([Agenda Item, C.8.a., Supplemental GMT Report 3, September 2021](#)).

The GMT notes that the deadline for this report is shortly after the scheduled conclusion of the stock assessment agenda item. Therefore, we did not have time to fully discuss and include the outcomes of that agenda item in time for this report. What is below is based on information we had available to us at the time of writing. We may provide additional information in November. The GMT does not have recommendations on specific harvest control rules as that is a Council risk tolerance decision.

Default Harvest Control Rules

Default harvest control rules (HCRs), as implemented under Amendment 24, will be applied to the best available scientific information to generate the 2023-24 harvest specifications, including overfishing limits (OFLs), acceptable biological catches (ABCs), and annual catch limits (ACLs). **The GMT recommends that the Council indicate at this meeting if it would like to depart from the default HCRs for any species.** This timing is necessary to coordinate with stock assessors and prepare information for the November 2021 Council meeting, when the Council is scheduled to adopt preliminary preferred ACL alternatives for overwinter analysis by the GMT. This information will also be discussed during the GMT's October work session.

Rebuilding Plans/Analysis

There is the potential for rebuilding plans being needed for one or more species, if any species are declared overfished. We expect to learn more during the September Mop-Up Panel, will discuss at our October work session, and will provide supplemental information to the Council in November. The GMT does want to note that workload associated with rebuilding plan(s) and analysis could impact capacity for analyzing new management measures this cycle. Therefore, **we remind the Council to take this into consideration when adopting and prioritizing new management measures for inclusion in this biennial cycle.**

Alternative Harvest Control Rules

The GMT emphasizes that the primary objective, at this time, is to identify a range of alternatives for further analysis. We provide some initial scoping for each proposal. We also note that annual catch targets (ACTs) that are set below ACLs are another allocation-based management option, but are considered "management measures," which we discuss in Supplemental Report 3.

Comparing benefits and risks of different harvest strategies

Higher ACLs can provide greater economic benefits, but can also increase conservation risks, especially when a stock assessment's estimates of spawning biomass and relative stock status are highly uncertain. For this reason, stock assessors provide decision tables that allow the Council to

compare how higher and lower harvest strategies (e.g., P* of 0.45 vs. P* of 0.40, respectively) affect spawning biomass and relative stock status annually over the next ten years, taking into consideration assessment uncertainty. Decision tables elucidate the risks and trade-offs from alternative future management action and should be carefully considered during decision making. Table 1 contains species where alternative harvest specifications or control rules have been suggested thus far via public comment, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panel process, etc. The GMT does not have recommendations on these alternatives at this time, we are just providing them here for Council consideration.

Table 1. Alternative harvest specifications the GMT has heard proposed for 2023-24 for Council consideration.

#	Stock	Default HCR	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
1	Sablefish	ABC P* 0.45	ABC P* 0.35	ABC P* 0.40
2	Lingcod north of 40° 10' N lat.	ABC P* 0.45	ABC P* 0.40	N/A
3	Lingcod south of 40° 10' N lat.	ABC P* 0.45	ABC P* 0.40	N/A
4	Black rockfish Oregon	ABC P* 0.45	“Case-by-case” ABC set = 2020 ABC of 512 mt	N/A
5	Pacific spiny dogfish	ABC P* 0.40	ABC P* 0.35	N/A
7	Vermilion/sunset rockfish north of 40° 10' N lat.	ABC P* 0.45	ABC P* 0.40	N/A
8	Vermilion/sunset rockfish south of 40° 10' N lat.	ABC P* 0.45	ABC P* 0.40	N/A
9	Quillback rockfish California	Place holders depending on outcome of stock assessment council action at this meeting and/or Mop-Up Panel		
10	Copper rockfish California			

1-Sablefish

The default HCR for sablefish is to apply a P* of 0.45 and set the ACL equal to the ABC which was set during the 2021-22 biennial process, had previously been P* of 0.40. There is a public comment letter requesting the Council to instead adopt a P* of 0.35 for sablefish. However, the letter does not specify if that is for north or south of 36° N lat. or both; the GMT would like some clarification on that. The request is based on some concerns for the stock long term, uncertainty in the assessment, and potential market impacts due to large annual changes in the ACL. The Council could consider a P* of 0.40 which is the midpoint between the default HCR and the Alternative 1 proposal.

2-Lingcod north of 40° 10' N lat.

The default HCR for sablefish north of 40° 10' N lat. is to apply a P* of 0.45 and set the ACL equal to the ABC. As this is now a Category 2 stock, the sigma will be adjusted from that of the previous Category 1. During the STAR panel, a P* of 0.40 catch projection was conducted as a possible management option to account for the large uncertainty in the assessment. Therefore, the P* of 0.40 is included as a potential Alternative 2.

3-Lingcod south of 40° 10' N lat.

The default and alternative are the same as for lingcod north of 40° 10' N lat. and for the same reasons.

4-Black rockfish Oregon

The No Action 2023-24 ABCs for Oregon black rockfish (470 mt and 466 mt, respectively) are based on using the maximum P* of 0.45 and the Category 2 time-varying sigma. ODFW is requesting a case-by-case ABC to be set equal to the 2020 ABC (512 mt) which used a P* of 0.45 and the previous static sigma value of 0.72 (i.e., the Category 2 sigma value in place at the time of the assessment in 2015). This alternative harvest specification for 2023-24 should stabilize harvest levels and fisheries while allowing time for incorporation of new ODFW hydroacoustic survey results, which will provide current information on biomass in Oregon waters, into a new full assessment in 2023 which will inform future specifications.

5-Pacific spiny dogfish

The GMT realizes this draft assessment will be going to the September 2021 Mop-up Review Panel to further investigate priors for the Northwest Fisheries Science Center West Coast Groundfish Bottom Trawl Survey catchability coefficient (Q) and, depending on the outcome, the scale of the stock and status may change significantly. In the event the resulting OFLs for 2023 and beyond are higher than those projected under a P* of 0.4 in the draft assessment (Agenda Item G.5. Attachment 3: Draft FULL ASSESSMENT, June 2021), Council may want to consider an even more precautionary approach by including an Alternative 1 of a P* of 0.35 in the Range of Alternatives. The GMT may provide additional information in November after hearing the results of the September Mop-up Review Panel.

6-Vermilion/sunset rockfish north of 40° 10' N lat.

The default HCR for vermilion rockfish north of 40° 10' N lat. is to apply a P* of 0.45 and set the ACL equal to the ABC. With the recent overages of the OFL contribution to the Minor Shelf complex north of 40° 10' N lat., the Council may want to consider being more precautionary and apply a P * of 0.40 (Alternative 1).

7-Vermilion/sunset rockfish south of 40° 10' N lat.

The default and alternative are the same as for vermilion/sunset rockfish north of 40° 10' N lat. and for the same reasons. With the recent overages of the OFL contribution to the Minor Shelf complex south of 40° 10' N lat., the Council may want to consider being more precautionary and apply a P* of 0.40 (Alternative 1). However, the GMT notes there have been some recent measures taken to help reduce catch in both the commercial in June 2020 (85 FR 35210) and recreational fisheries in January 2021 (85 FR 79880); therefore, extra precautionary measures at the harvest specifications level may not be warranted.

9 & 10- Quillback and copper rockfish in California

This is a placeholder for now, depending on the outcome of Council discussions/decisions on the stock assessment agenda item at this meeting (scheduled to conclude as this report is due), and potentially the outcome of the Mop-Up Review Panel. The GMT will provide additional information, if necessary, in November.

Managing Species within a Complex

The GMT anticipates the need to have discussions about harvest specifications for, and the management of, species within complexes, especially in light of new assessments, recent harvests, and potential overfished declarations. However, the GMT would like to hear the Council discussion on stock assessments at this meeting (scheduled to conclude at the same time this report is due) as well as the results of the Mop-Up Review Panel scheduled for later this month before commenting. We intend to discuss this more at our October work session, and will provide supplemental information in November.

PFMC
09/14/21