

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INITIAL HARVEST
SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE ACTIONS FOR 2023-24
MANAGEMENT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received information from Mr. John DeVore, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff officer, regarding 2023-2024 biennial harvest specifications and management measures and considered the documents under this agenda item. The GAP recommends the following suggestions for Council consideration.

Harvest specifications

The GAP recognizes that much of the discussion regarding biennial harvest specifications and management measures will likely take place in November 2021 because of pending action on several stock assessments.

For several stocks, notably the species listed in Table 1 and Table 2 of [C.8, Attachment 1](#), the GAP supports use of the default harvest control rules (HCRs) except for black rockfish in Oregon.

The following table summarizes GAP recommendations for important stocks being discussed at this meeting.

Table 1. Summary of GAP recommendations for specific stocks.

Species	Attachment 1	GAP recommendation
Sablefish (coastwide)	P*=0.45	P*=0.45
Lingcod	OFL projection using SPR harvest rate of 45%; pending final stock assessment adoption; P*=0.45	Retain P*=0.45 both north and south for analysis; GAP will provide more rationale in November
Black rockfish	OFL projection using SPR harvest rate of 50%; P*=0.45	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) report
Vermilion rockfish	State- or region-specific, pending final stock assessment adoption; P*=0.45	Retain P*=0.45 for analysis; GAP will provide more rationale in November

Sablefish

The GAP supports a P*=0.45, as outlined in [C. 8, Attachment 1](#). This stock is an important stock to all fleets, is in good shape, and the Council approved a P* of 0.45 for this year and in 2022.

The GAP notes the sablefish stock appears to be healthy, with good recruitment. The need for changing the P* does not appear to be warranted. Furthermore, the recent assessment showed sablefish was more productive than believed previously and it did not drop below the 40% of unfished biomass (B₄₀) in the past. Again, changing the P* now for management uncertainty does not appear warranted to the GAP.

The Council had substantial discussion about this during the last harvest specifications cycle, in November 2019, and again in April 2020. The minutes of the November 2019 meeting note:

“... the change in depletion or the difference in depletion between the P star .45 and .4 over a 10-year period is almost imperceptible as shown in GMT Report 2, table 11, and the estimated additional economic benefits of the P star of .45 are substantial, as the GMT noted those in their report 2 in table 13.”

Furthermore, in April 2020, the Council highlighted that sablefish is an economically important stock for trawl, fixed gear, and open access fisheries, and the stock is assessed regularly

Lingcod

The GAP suggests retaining $P^*=0.45$ within the range for analysis and expects to have more discussion regarding the P^* value at the November Council meeting.

Black rockfish

The GAP agrees with the [ODFW report](#) for considering black rockfish on a case-by-case basis in Oregon. That is:

“ODFW recommends including an alternative Oregon black rockfish ABC of 512 mt for 2023 and 2024 in the range, along with the default that would result from application of sigma for a category 2 stock last assessed in 2015 and $P^* = 0.45$.”

The Council approved a similar request from ODFW during the last biennial harvest specifications cycle. The GAP thinks these specifications are working well and supports their use in the next biennium.

As noted in the report, a default harvest control rule likely will constrain fisheries, both to the recreational sector and commercial nearshore fishermen in particular. Black rockfish is the primary target species for both sport fishermen and the small-boat commercial fleet.

The GAP agrees with moving forward with this proposal.

Vermilion rockfish

The GAP suggests retaining $P^*=0.45$ within the range for analysis and expects to have more discussion regarding the P^* value at the November Council meeting. The GAP understands the GMT may discuss removing vermilion and sunset rockfish from the shelf rockfish complex between now and the November Council meeting; the GAP expects we will provide more comments at that time.

Spiny dogfish

The GAP has no comment on spiny dogfish specifications at this time because the assessment for dogfish will be discussed at the mop-up panel later this month and considered for adoption by the Council in November.

Management measures

The GAP highlights that development of management measures for 2023-2024 will require prioritization by the Council given the workload demands and need to implement regulations by January 1, 2023. This is especially important because of the yet-to-be-determined status of several important species and the related effects on potential management measures.

As discussed at this meeting, the GAP would like to see the [Yellowtail Rockfish Jig Fishing \(Emley-Platt\) exempted fishing permit \(EFP\)](#) regulation and modification of the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) lines continue moving forward via whatever vehicle is best. Both of these actions could have significant economic benefits to the limited entry fixed gear and open access fleets.

As a general consideration for developing 2023-2024 management measures for nearshore fisheries, recent stock status information indicates midwater species in nearshore zones are relatively healthy and abundant. Therefore, the GAP recommends the Council consider development of measures that facilitate access to these species by commercial and recreational fleets using midwater gear. This is likely to provide fishermen more opportunity and relieve some of the pressure on nearshore bottom-dwelling species.

California RCA and CCA lines

The GAP supports the California Department of Fish and Wildlife proposal for repealing the Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA) boundary lines and modifying of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) lines, as described in Supplemental [CDFW Report 1](#).

While some of these changes are technical fixes, others are more strategic and would benefit the fishing industry since cowcod rockfish are no longer considered overfished. These changes would provide additional opportunities and, more importantly, flexibility to California fleets. The GAP thanks CDFW for its effort on this item and supports moving it forward.

Shortbelly rockfish

The GAP recognizes the Council included consideration of a prohibition on development of a directed fishery for shortbelly rockfish in the initial package of management measures for 2023-2024. As expressed previously by the GAP, we have strong concerns about this action because, among other things:

- 1) it will have significant operational effects on fishermen and processors that are yet to be determined;
- 2) it will potentially add a high workload burden to the specifications and measures analysis (see [Agenda Item C.8.a, GMT Report 1, September 2021](#));
- 3) it is not currently necessary, nor is there a likelihood it would be needed during the next management biennium; and
- 4) it should not displace potential management measures that will directly benefit fishery participants, such as adoption of new coordinates for RCA and CCA lines off California.

Therefore, the GAP recommends the Council consider the need for including this measure in the package going forward within the context of the need for the action, its priority relative to other measures currently in the mix and additional management measures that could be required depending upon the outcomes of the mop-up panel, and the workload tradeoffs between this item and measures that will directly benefit fishery participants.

New management measure proposal

At this time, the GAP proposes changing the season end date for the sablefish tier fishery from Oct. 31 to Dec. 31. The Council approved an emergency rule for this in 2020 and will consider a similar request for this year. It is unclear at this point whether this could move forward through the 2023-2034 management measures process or the primary sablefish tier fishery five-year review. However, the GAP supports this change via whichever process is most expedient.

PFMC
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