

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

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received an overview from Mr. Todd Phillips of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff and Mr. Brian Hooper of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and provides comments below on potential management measures. Harvest specifications are covered in Supplemental Report 2.

Preliminary Range of Management Measures

Under this agenda item, the Council must adopt a preliminary range of potential new management measures. Adopting the measures at this meeting provides the GMT with a preliminary list of management measures to analyze at our October work session and allows for more substantive feedback to Council at the November meeting.

The Council can continue to prioritize new management measures brought up under the groundfish prioritization agenda item outside of the harvest specifications process by scheduling them as stand-alone agenda items on the year-at-a-glance. In order to best utilize this process and provide increased transparency to constituents, the GMT suggests the Council not include emerging management issues in the 2023-24 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures agenda item outside of those required to keep stocks within their harvest specifications. Providing analysis to support changes on such issues would detract from our ability to engage on prioritized stand-alone agenda items, such as changes to the non-trawl spatial management tools and gear switching/sablefish area management. The GMT has been given guidance by NMFS that management measures in the 2023-24 package should be limited to changes to trip limits, bag limits, season structures, and other measures needed to implement the harvest specifications for the biennium. Table 1 lists the allocation measures that have been identified so far. Table 2 lists the catch control measures that have been identified so far. Additional information is provided below the tables on select items that were not covered in [Agenda Item C.8.a GMT Report 1, September 2021](#) and actions not taken every cycle (i.e. trawl/non-trawl allocations, recreational season structures). The GMT will provide additional information at the November Council meeting on items from this list and from the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel, as well as any other items that the Council identifies.

Table 1. Allocation measures identified by the GMT, so far, for consideration for 2023-24. Abbreviations: ACT = annual catch target, EFP = exempted fishing permit, IOA = incidental open access, HG = harvest guidelines.

Item # (not ranked)	Management Measure	Sector(s) affected	Description
All Sectors			
1	ACT(s)	All	Cowcod had an ACT of 50 mt and yelloweye rockfish was also managed with a non-trawl ACT of 29.5 mt in 2021-22
2	Off-the-top deductions (EFPs, Research, IOA, Treaty)	All	Updates based on Tribal requests, research, EFPs, and IOA
3	Trawl/non-trawl allocations	All	Cowcod, yelloweye, big skate, longnose skate, minor shelf rockfish north, minor shelf rockfish south, bocaccio, canary
4	Within trawl allocations	Trawl	Canary, widow rockfish
5	Within trawl at-sea set-asides	Trawl	Placeholder; may not need to make any adjustments
6	Within non-trawl HGs, or shares	Non-trawl	Cowcod, yelloweye, bocaccio south, canary, blackgill, sablefish south of 36°, minor nearshore rockfish north

Table 2. Catch control measures identified by the GMT, so far, for consideration for 2023-24. Abbreviations: CDFW = California Department of Fish and Wildlife, NT-RCA = non-trawl rockfish conservation area, RCA = Rockfish Conservation Area, WA = Washington, OR = Oregon, CA = California, LE = limited entry, FG = fixed gear.

Item # (not ranked)	Management Measures	Sector(s)	Description
All Sectors			
7	Prohibit directed fishery for shortbelly rockfish	All	See public comment letter (G.2 and C.6 Shortbelly letter Audubon.Oceana 3.1.2021.pdf)
8	Cowcod Conservation Area removal	All	See CDFW Report (Agenda Item C.8.a, Supplemental CDFW Report, September 2021)
Trawl			
None identified so far			
Non-Trawl			
9	Proposed New Coordinates for NT-RCA Boundary Lines off of CA	Rec, FG	See CDFW September 2021 Supplemental Report 1 and June 2021
10	Groundfish retention in the salmon troll fisheries	Troll	Industry requests to increase groundfish retention allowances within the RCA
11	Sablefish primary tier fishery end date	LE FG	Extend the season end date to Dec 31; could alternately be taken up as part of the fixed gear catch shares review process
12	WA rec season structure	WA Rec	bag limits, season structure, length limits, etc.
13	OR rec season structure	OR Rec	bag limits, season structure, length limits, etc.
14	CA rec season structure	CA Rec	bag limits, season structure, length limits, etc.
15	Nearshore trip limits	FG	TBD
16	Non-nearshore trip limits	FG	Remove the daily limit for the sablefish Daily-Trip-Limit Open Access sector north of 36° N lat.

Additional Information on Select Items

1-Annual Catch Targets (ACTs)

While the Council could select an annual catch limit lower than the allowable biological catch to account for management uncertainty, another approach could be the use of an ACT. ACTs are soft targets, not hard caps, and are useful when there is unusually high uncertainty in projections of fishery impacts or delays in monitoring inseason catches. As a reminder, during the 2021-22 harvest specifications and management measures process the Council adopted a 50 mt ACT for cowcod, to account for assessment uncertainty. Additionally, the Council chose to manage the non-trawl fisheries with an ACT for yelloweye rockfish of 29.5 mt as a precautionary measure. Trawl fisheries remained at the harvest guideline based on the full ACL.

11-Sablefish Primary Tier Fishery End Date

Extending the season end date of the primary tier fishery in regulation for 2023-24 and beyond from October 31 to December 31 could be included in either the biennial harvest specifications process or through a separate action as part of the Fixed Gear Catch Share Program Review (which will likely be scheduled for the November 2021 Council meeting). In selecting a pathway forward, the Council should consider that this action would require a Fisheries Management Plan amendment to change the season months. The GMT also notes that an emergency action to extend the season was needed in 2020 and is under consideration for 2021 at this meeting. The 2022 season may face similar challenges, and action on this item could potentially pre-empt the need for an emergency action in September 2022. Additionally, industry may have input on which process would be preferable based on the timing of implementation. The Council should consider the most efficient process for addressing this issue.

PFMC
09/13/21