GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS INCLUDING PACIFIC WHITING SET-ASIDES - FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discussed the current status of 2022 groundfish fisheries, requests from industry, and any needs for inseason adjustments during the November 2022 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting.

Action Items

It is the GMT's understanding that due to workload with finalizing the 2023-24 biennial harvest specifications and management measures regulations, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) may not be able to implement any inseason changes adopted at this meeting until after January 1, 2023. Additionally, the GMT notes that in January 2023[1], the trip limits for all stocks with an action alternative in this report will default to the Council-preferred trip limits that were finalized in the 2023-24 harvest specifications and management measures package, which the Council took final action on in June 2022. The values finalized in the 2023-24 harvest specifications and management measures package represent the No Action alternative in this report.

Pacific Whiting Set-Aside

As part of this inseason action, the Council is tasked with selecting a value for the Pacific whiting set-aside to accommodate mortality in research and the pink shrimp fishery. Section 6.3.2.2 of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (Groundfish FMP) specifies that set-asides for "recreational, research, and non-whiting fisheries," in addition to set-asides to accommodate tribal whiting fisheries, are deducted before allocating the nontribal commercial share of Pacific whiting to the limited entry trawl sectors (i.e., shoreside, Mothership, and Catcher-Processor). Therefore, a higher research and pink shrimp set-aside reduces the amount of Pacific whiting allocated to the sectors that target the species.

Prior to 2021, the set-aside was 1,500 mt but has since been lowered to 750 mt due to a declining trend in mortality by research and the pink shrimp fishery. While this declining trend appears to have continued into 2021 for the pink shrimp fishery, the research-associated mortality jumped from an annual average of 11 mt in 2018-2020 to 828 mt in 2021. Large fluctuations in research mortality appear to be linked to years in which the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) conduct specific research projects, which are years when the annual Joint U.S.-Canada Integrated Ecosystem and Pacific hake (i.e., Pacific whiting) Acoustic Trawl Survey is not conducted. For example, in 2021, the majority of the 828 mt taken in 2021 was due to a research project focused on testing methods to distinguish Pacific whiting from mixed Pacific whiting and rockfish aggregations to improve future estimation of Pacific whiting biomass. The NWFSC does not plan to conduct any specific research projects in 2023 aside from conducting the U.S.-Canada joint annual Pacific hake survey, so **the GMT**

[1] Specifically, when the 2023-24 harvest specifications and management measures rulemaking is finalized in regulations and effective, whether January 1, 2023 or a later date.

recommends setting the 2023 Pacific whiting set-aside for research and the pink shrimp fishery at 750 mt, the same as in 2022.

Sablefish North of 36° N. Lat.

The Council took action to increase sablefish trip limits in September 2022 to improve attainment opportunities in the fleet (Agenda Item G.10.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, September 2022). Participants in the Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access sectors north of 36° N. lat. (LEN; OAN) requested sablefish trip limits that are higher than the No Action trip limits, because the sablefish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and allocations are increasing substantially in 2023 and participation is still being impacted by economic factors. While the OAN fleet appears to be steadily returning to somewhat of pre-pandemic effort levels, potentially due to low opportunities in other fisheries, the LEN sector continues to see low prices, participation, and landings relative to years immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Limited Entry Fixed Gear North of 36° N. Lat.

The GMT ran projections under No Action trip limits as well as trip limits that were in place for Period 5 and 6 of 2022 (Option 1). The landings projections and attainment, relative to the landed catch share (i.e., "target"), for both options are shown in Table 1 below. Inflation adjusted sablefish prices in the LEN sector have been tracking low in 2022, relative to pre-COVID prices, particularly in Period 5 of 2022. Given that the landed catch share will increase substantially in 2023 and that Option 1 attainment is projected to be 47-74 percent (depending on prices), **the GMT recommends Option 1 trip limits of 4,500 lbs. per week and 9,000 lbs. bimonthly for the LEN sector.** The GMT reminds the Council that the primary tier sablefish season will be extended from an end date of October 31 to December 31 starting in 2023, and having more LEN sablefish opportunity earlier in the year may be beneficial to the fleet if vessels that participate in both fisheries continue fishing their tier limits through December 31. Under Option 1 trip limits, the fleet could see an estimated increase of $304,734 in ex-vessel revenue for the full year, compared to No Action (Table 2). The LEN model is underestimating 2022 landings by roughly 5 percent, but even under a high price scenario, the Option 1 trip limits provide a projected 26 percent buffer below the landed catch share.

Table 1. Trip limit options in the LEN sector for the full year of 2023, assuming January 1, 2023 implementation. Bolded row represents the GMT recommendation.

Option	Trip Limit	Projected Landings (rd. wt. mt) under Three Price Scenarios			Landed Catch Share (mt)	Attainment under Three Price Scenarios		
		Low	Average	High		Low	Average	High
No Action	2,400 lbs./week not to exceed 4,800 lbs./2 months	117	151	186	**417**	28%	36%	45%
1	**4,500 lbs./week not to exceed 9,000 lbs./2 months**	**196**	**253**	**310**		**47%**	**61%**	**74%**

Table 2. Estimated total 2023 ex-vessel revenue ($USD) under the LEN sablefish trip limit options, assuming an average sablefish price scenario. Bolded row represents the GMT recommendation.

Option	Trip Limit	Estimated Ex-vessel Revenue	Increase in Ex-vessel Revenue Compared to No Action
No Action	2,400 lbs./week not to exceed 4,800 lbs./2 months	$847,741	-
1	**4,500 lbs./week not to exceed 9,000 lbs./2 months**	**$1,152,475**	**$304,734**

Open Access North of 36° N. lat.

For the OAN sector, the GMT ran three separate sablefish trip limit projections, because the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) expressed interest in lowering the OAN trip limits from the 2022 Period 5 & 6 trip limits but still keeping them higher than the No Action trip limits. This is primarily because OAN effort may be high in 2023 due to constraints in other fisheries the fleet operates in, such as Dungeness crab and salmon. Therefore, the GMT ran an Option 1 projection that is squarely in the middle of No Action and Option 2 limits (i.e., current limits). Landings under Option 1 are projected to be similar in attainment to the LEN sector (Table 3), while still providing higher opportunity than No Action trip limits, and therefore, **the GMT recommends Option 1 trip limits of 3,000 lbs. per week and 6,000 lbs. bimonthly for the OAN sector.** Under Option 1, the OAN fleet could see an estimated increase of $685,059 in ex-vessel revenue for the full year, compared to No Action (Table 4). The OAN model is overestimating 2022 landings by roughly 6 percent. The GMT reminds the Council that starting in 2023, there will not be a daily sablefish trip limit in the OAN sector, which also warrants more precautionary weekly and bimonthly limits than Option 2.

Table 3. Trip limit options in the OAN sector for the full year of 2023, assuming January 1, 2023 implementation. Bolded row represents the GMT recommendation.

Option	Trip Limit	Projected Landings (rd. wt. mt) under Three Price Scenarios			Landed Catch Share (mt)	Attainment under Three Price Scenarios		
		Low	Average	High		Low	Average	High
No Action	2,000 lbs./week not to exceed 4,000 lbs./2 months	278	322	367		40%	47%	53%
1	**3,000 lbs./week not to exceed 6,000 lbs./2 months**	**386**	**448**	**509**	**687**	**56%**	**65%**	**74%**
2	4,000 lbs./week not to exceed 8,000 lbs./2 months	494	573	652		72%	83%	95%

Table 4. Estimated total 2023 ex-vessel revenue ($USD) under the OAN sablefish trip limit options, assuming an average sablefish price scenario. Bolded row represents the GMT recommendation.

Option	Trip Limit	Estimated Ex-vessel Revenue	Increase in Ex-vessel Revenue Compared to No Action
No Action	2,000 lbs./week not to exceed 4,000 lbs./2 months	$1,761,145	-
1	**3,000 lbs./week not to exceed 6,000 lbs./2 months**	**$2,446,204**	**$685,059**
2	4,000 lbs./week not to exceed 8,000 lbs./2 months	$3,132,386	$1,371,241

Canary Rockfish

The GMT received a request from the GAP to adjust 2023 canary rockfish trip limits for both the limited entry fixed gear (LEFG) and open access (OA) fisheries, north and south of 40° 10′ N. lat. The request was to increase LEFG trip limits to 4,000 lbs. per 2 months and OA to 2,000 lbs. per 2 months, because seasonal fisheries (e.g., Dungeness crab and salmon) may be limited at the beginning of the year. Additionally, the OAN fishery seeks to increase attainment of yellowtail rockfish under current trip limits in 2023. However, regulatory discarding of canary rockfish may occur in the OAN sector due to the differences in trip limits for canary rockfish (1,000 lbs. per 2 months) and yellowtail rockfish (1,500 lbs. per month), thus increasing the canary rockfish trip limits in 2023 may reduce regulatory discarding.

Table 5 provides a full year of estimated impacts from a few different options for canary rockfish trip limits. The options in Table 5 are presented in a way to show impacts from the sectors if the same trip limits were coastwide (i.e., LE has the same limit north and south of 40° 10′ N. lat.); however, the options can be mixed and matched based on the Council's preferred level of precaution. The largest adjustment (i.e., LE = 4,000 lbs. per 2 months; OA = 2,000 lbs. per 2 months) increases the projected landings by 1.4 mt for LEN, 5.2 mt for OAN, 0.9 mt for LES, and 4.1 mt for OAS. The estimated total mortality from the largest adjustment would be approximately 32 percent of the non-trawl commercial share. The average price per pound of canary rockfish caught in the non-trawl commercial fisheries in 2022 is approximately $2.80; therefore, under the largest adjustment, the projected ex-vessel revenue for LEN is $8,633, for OAN is $32,132, for LES is $5,247, and OAS is $25,013.

The GMT recommends Option 2 in Table 5, which increases the trip limits for LEFG to 4,000 lbs per 2 months and OA to 2,000 lbs per 2 months, for both north and south of 40° 10′ N. lat. The adjustment will provide some additional opportunity to the non-trawl commercial fleet at the beginning of the year when there may be limited seasons for other non-groundfish fisheries. Additionally, it may help increase attainment of yellowtail rockfish while reducing regulatory discarding of canary rockfish north of 40° 10′ N. lat. Lastly, the adjustment would provide some additional opportunity to a healthy shelf species south of 40° 10′ N. lat.

Table 5. Options to increase canary trip limits by period in the LEN, OAN, LES, and OAS sectors, associated landings projections, estimated mortality, and non-trawl commercial share attainment. Bolded row represents the GMT recommendation.

Sector, Option	Trip limit	Landings projection (mt)	Est total mortality (mt)*	% of the 2023 Non-trawl commercial share (121.2 mt)
No Action				
LEN	3,000 lbs. / 2 mos.	4.2	27.5	23%
OAN	1,000 lbs. / 2 mos.	5.2		
LES	3,500 lbs. / 2 mos.	5.9		
OAS	1,500 lbs. / 2 mos.	12.2		
Option 1				
LEN	3,500 lbs. / 2 mos.	4.9	31.1	26%
OAN	1,500 lbs. / 2 mos.	7.8		
LES	3,500 lbs. / 2 mos.	6.2		
OAS	1,500 lbs. / 2 mos.	12.2		
Option 2				
LEN	**4,000 lbs. / 2 mos.**	**5.6**	**39**	**32%**
OAN	**2,000 lbs. / 2 mos.**	**10.4**		
LES	**4,000 lbs. / 2 mos.**	**6.8**		
OAS	**2,000 lbs. / 2 mos.**	**16.2**		

*2022 estimated discard with mortality rates applied for both LE and OA sectors, coastwide. Data source: GEMM

Lingcod LEFG/OA North of 42° N. Lat.

The GMT also received a request from the GAP for increased lingcod take in the LEFG fishery north of 42° N. lat. to continue ***Table 6*** trip limits which were implemented to reduce regulatory discards (Agenda Item G.10.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, September 2022). The GMT modeled no action trip limits of 5,000 lbs. bimonthly for LEFG and 2,500 per month for OA, as well as Option 1 trip limits of 7,000 lbs. bimonthly for LEFG and 3,500 lbs. per month for OA. With the increase under Option 1, the projected attainment remains low relative to the non-trawl allocation (Table 6). Projected impacts to yelloweye rockfish are higher under Option 1 but remain well within the non-trawl yelloweye rockfish projected impacts of 3.9 mt, which assumes full attainment of the non-trawl allocations, as well as within the 6.3 mt non-trawl commercial annual catch target. Based on projected landings for the two sectors, the potential economic gains would be $37,977.33 for LE and $84,799.47 for OA (based on 2022 price per metric ton values). The GMT discussed with members of the GAP whether this opportunity could lead to increased effort, but they did not believe that concern was warranted at this time, due to competing fisheries. **The GMT recommends Option 1, because the increase in lingcod is expected to reduce regulatory discards and provide additional opportunity for some industry members already in the fishery.**

Table 6. Projected lingcod landings and yelloweye impacts under No Action and alternative trip limit options for lingcod north of 42° N. lat. Bolded row represents the GMT recommendation.

Option	Sector	Projected Landings (mt)	Non-trawl Allocation (mt)	% Attainment	Projected Yelloweye Rockfish Impacts (mt)	Non-Trawl Commercial Projected Yelloweye Rockfish Impacts (mt)
No Action	LE	24.3	2,573.8	5.2%	1.11	3.9
	OA	110.4				
1	**LE**	**30.0**	**2,573.8**	**6.2%**	**1.32**	**3.9**
	OA	**129.4**				

Oregon Recreational Longleader Gear Request

The GMT was given an overview of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) report (Agenda Item H.6.a, Supplemental REVISED ODFW Report 1, November 2022) by ODFW staff. The action is intended to shift effort and catches away from nearshore stocks towards the more plentiful offshore species and could help reduce the potential for further restrictions and/or closure of the regular bottomfish fishery. The GMT concurs with the conclusions of the ODFW report concerning potential impacts from the increased bag limit in the longleader gear fishery. The potential additional impacts from increasing the longleader gear fishery bag limit should be within limits, not impact other sectors, nor jeopardize exceeding any species ACLs or species-specific contribution to complex ACLs for all species except canary rockfish. The potential additional impacts to canary rockfish could put total Oregon recreational impacts very close to the Oregon recreational share of the non-trawl canary rockfish harvest guideline. It is the GMT's understanding that ODFW will monitor canary rockfish impacts closely inseason, and will take action to reduce impacts through state process if necessary to keep total canary rockfish impacts within the Oregon recreational share.

The GMT recommends NMFS consider the options for implementation, or provide guidance on the most appropriate manner if this does not qualify for the regular groundfish inseason process.

Informational Items

Minor Shelf Rockfish North of 40° 10′ N. Lat.

The GMT notes concern from the GAP that the minor shelf rockfish complex trip limits north of 40° 10′ N. lat. are lower than the limits for canary rockfish, yellowtail rockfish, and widow rockfish, particularly for OAN, and the consequent potential for regulatory discarding of minor shelf rockfish. The 2023-24 harvest specifications rulemaking allows certain OA gear types to access the non-trawl rockfish conservation area, and therefore, there is potential for increased landings of shelf stocks as fishermen gain more areas to target healthy shelf stocks. Although this initial concern is with the trip limits north of 40° 10′ N. lat., the GMT will continue to monitor landings and how they compare to trip limits to inform potential inseason trip limit changes for either management area in the future.

Incidental Pacific Halibut Fishery North of Pt. Chehalis

The 2022 primary tier sablefish fishery allocation of incidental Pacific halibut north of Point Chehalis, Washington (WA) is 50,000 lbs. As of November 2nd, 2022, the fishery has landed 57,261 lbs., which exceeds the allocation by 7,261 lbs. However, the primary tier fishery allocation is a subset of the overall WA sport allocation, which is 294,786 lbs. in 2022 (Agenda Item E.1, Attachment 2, November 2022). At least 52,000 lbs. of Pacific halibut are unused by the WA sport fishery pending final recreational catch estimates for Puget Sound, which are expected to be relatively low. Therefore, no action is necessary, and the GMT is only providing this information to the Council for awareness. If the primary tier fishery allocation continues to be 50,000 lbs. in 2023 (determined at the International Pacific Halibut Commission Annual Meeting January 23-27, 2023), the Council may want to consider lowering the incidental Pacific halibut to sablefish ratio for this fishery to avoid exceeding the allocation again, especially given the primary tier season extension implemented as part of the 2023-24 harvest specifications and management measures package.

California Recreational Fishery

While at this meeting, in a joint session with the GAP, the GMT heard that industry is interested in reviewing 2023-24 management measures for the California recreational fishery in early 2023, specifically to review and discontinue the closure shoreward of the 50-fathom line in the Central and Southern Management Areas during the latter part of the season. In the joint session, NMFS staff reminded the advisory bodies that new information is needed to provide just cause to waive public notice and comment for inseason action. Given that the timing of this request is for an adjustment later in the season, it is difficult to justify waiving public comment, and there is no new information to support making adjustments to 2023 management measures at this time. The GMT suggested to the GAP that they put forth a request later in the season when there may be enough new information to take inseason action.

Chinook Salmon Scorecard

Table 7 shows Chinook salmon catches from groundfish fisheries and trawl EFPs as of November 4 2022, in relation to the sector thresholds. For more details on salmon catch in the trawl EFPs see H.6.a, NMFS REVISED Supplemental Report 1: 2022 Trawl Gear EFP.

Table 7. Chinook salmon catch to date (in numbers of fish) in 2022 as of November 4, 2022 in relation to the sector thresholds in numbers of fish (Source: PacFIN IFQ521 Combined Sector Salmon Bycatch ESA Report).

Sector a/	Sub-Sector	Catch To Date (numbers of fish)	% of Threshold	Total Threshold (numbers of fish)
Whiting	CP	1,997	18%	**11,000**
	MS	682	6%	
	Shoreside	2,313	21%	
	Tribal	560 b/	5%	
	Total	5,552	50%	
Non-Whiting	Bottom Trawl	315	6%	**5,500**
	Midwater Trawl	110	2%	
	Tribal	21	0.4%	
	Fixed Gear	500 c/	9%	
	WA Rec			
	OR Rec + longleader			
	CA Rec			
	Total	946	17%	
All groundfish fisheries & EFPs		**6,498**		

a/ Also, 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.

Shortbelly Rockfish Scorecard

Table 8 estimates that shortbelly rockfish mortality as of November 4, 2022 is 333.3 mt (approximately 17 percent of the 2,000 mt threshold). Up-to-date estimates of total mortality from all sectors can be found anytime at the public groundfish scorecard (Report GMT007) on the PacFIN Reports Dashboard.

Table 8. Estimated mortality of shortbelly rockfish by sector, as of November 4, 2022. (Source: PacFIN)

Sector	Estimated Mortality (mt)
At-Sea Hake Catcher Processor	5.3
At-Sea Hake Mothership	47.6
IFQ	102.1
Incidental/Miscellaneous	*
Shoreside Hake	178.3
Treaty	*
Total	333.3
Threshold	2,000
Percent of threshold	16.7%

* Indicates confidential

Rebuilding Species Scorecard

Table 9 shows yelloweye rockfish projections from groundfish fisheries as of November 4, 2022, in relation to the harvest guidelines (HG) and annual catch targets (ACT). The Oregon and Washington recreational projected year end impacts have been updated based on the most current inseason data.

Table 9. Projected mortality impact (metric tons) of yelloweye rockfish by sector, as of November 4 2022.

Fishery	Yelloweye rockfish		
Date: November 4, 2022	**HG Allocations a/**	**ACT Allocations a/**	**Projected Impacts f/**
Off the Top Deductions	8.85	8.85	10.22
EFP b/	0.24	0.24	0.02
Research c/	2.92	2.92	2.58
Incidental OA d/	0.69	0.69	2.62
Tribal e/	5.0	5.0	5.0
Bottom Trawl			0
Troll			0
Fixed gear	5	5	5
mid-water			0
whiting			
Trawl Allocations	3.4	3.4	0.6
-SB Trawl	3.4	3.4	0.6
-At-Sea Trawl	0.0		0.0
a) At-sea Pacific whiting MS			
b) At-sea Pacific whiting CP			
Non-Trawl Allocation	38.8	30.4	21.3
Non-Nearshore	8.1	6.3	3.9
LE FG			
OA FG			
Directed OA: Nearshore			
Recreational Groundfish			
WA	9.9	7.8	3.7
OR	9.0	7.1	5.2
CA	11.7	9.2	8.5
TOTAL	51.0	42.6	32.1
Harvest Specification	**51**	**42.2**	**42.2**
Difference	0.0	-0.4	10.1
Percent of ACL	100.0%	101.0%	76.1%
Key	Blank cells = not applicable		
	Dashed (--) = trace, less than 0.1 mt		
	Gray shaded cells = Fixed values		
	Light blue shaded cells = off the top deductions		

a/ Formal allocations are represented in the black shaded cells and are specified in regulation in Tables 2b 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/ updated based on GMT's best estimates.