

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
NON-TRAWL AREA MANAGEMENT - FINAL PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from Council Staff regarding the Non-Trawl Sector Area Management Analysis ([Agenda Item, F.4, Attachment 1](#)) and staff report summaries from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (F.4.a, Supplemental CDFW Report [1](#) and [2](#)) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife ([F.4.a, Supplemental REVISED ODFW Report 1](#)). We also received a preliminary draft of the Groundfish Management Team's report under this item. The GAP would like to express its appreciation of Council and agency staff who have contributed to the development of this very important action.

The GAP offers the following recommendations for selection of final preferred alternatives and additional changes for the amendment package.

Adopt Alternative 1, as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#): Modify gear specifications and catch restrictions applicable to fishing inside the NT_RCA between 46° 16' N. and the U.S./Mexico border for the directed open access (OA), limited entry fixed gear (LEFG) and individual fishing quota (IFQ) gear-switching fishery sectors, and include the following suboptions:

- Suboption 1: Allow LEFG vessels to fish up to LEFG trip limits in the NT_RCA when using stationary vertical jig gear or groundfish troll gear, and allow IFQ gear switching vessels to fish under their quota pounds in the NT_RCA using stationary vertical jig gear or groundfish troll gear;
- Suboption 2: Allow only those vessels using vertical stationary jig gear to use natural bait; and
- Suboption 3: Allow vertical stationary jig gear to be suspended no less than 30 feet from the bottom.

Adopt Alternative 2, as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#): Adjust the seaward boundary of the NT_RCA to 75 fathoms from 46° 16' N. latitude to 34° 27' N. latitude for both commercial groundfish and directed halibut fishing activity.

- Suboption 1d: Create a non-trawl bottom contact essential fish habitat conservation area (EFHCA) that prohibits groundfish and directed halibut fishing in bottom trawl EFHCAs that would otherwise be reopened under this action for Nehalem Bank and Bandon High Spot (as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#)).
- Suboption 1e: Create a non-trawl bottom contact EFHCA that prohibits groundfish and directed halibut fishing over the entire bottom trawl EFHCA for Garibaldi Reef North and Garibaldi Reef South (as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#), excluding Arago Reef for this suboption).

- New suboption for Arago Reef: Adopt the GMT-proposed non-trawl bottom contact EFHCA that prohibits groundfish and directed halibut fishing at Arago Reef (as identified in Supplemental GMT Report 1).
- Suboption 2: Implement a yelloweye rockfish conservation area (YRCA) that prohibits non-trawl groundfish and directed halibut bottom contact gear in the area west of the Heceta Bank EFHCA which would be active when this action is implemented (as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#)).
- Suboption 3: Create YRCAs that prohibit non-trawl groundfish and directed halibut bottom contact gear that could be used to mitigate impacts to yelloweye rockfish (as identified in [Supplemental REVISED ODFW report 1](#)). These YRCAs would not be active. This would provide geographic boundaries described in regulation for use in management, should yelloweye catch levels approach limits inseason, thus enabling early catch rate reductions in lieu of taking more drastic measures later.

Adopt Alternative 3 as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#): Repeal the Cowcod Conservation Areas (CCA) for Commercial and Recreational Fisheries.

- 1) Include development of new NT_RCA lines around islands and banks for management within the current boundaries of the CCA (as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#)).
- 2) Create groundfish exclusion areas (GEAs) for a) Hidden Reef, b) West of Santa Barbara Island c) Potato Bank, d) 107/118 Bank, e) Cherry Bank, f) Seamount 109, g) Northeast Bank, and h) the 43-Fathom Spot (as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#)).
- 3) The following restrictions would be applied in the GEAs (as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#)):
 - a) Allow continuous transit through the proposed closed areas with groundfish onboard, provided gear is stowed (commercial) or not deployed (recreational).
 - b) Maintain the ability to fish for non-groundfish species in these closed areas without groundfish aboard the vessel.

Adopt Alternative 4 as identified in [F.4, Attachment 1](#): Develop Block Area Closure Management Tool

The GAP also recommends including, as part of this amendment package, the changes suggested by CDFW around Cordell Bank ([F.4.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1](#)) and waypoint correction as noted in [F.4.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 2](#).

The GAP highlights this part of the Purpose and Need that speaks to the importance of this action:

“The non-trawl sector is presently unable to access many target species where they are most abundant. The actions are needed to provide increased access to non-overfished shelf rockfish stocks and other important target stocks that can be found in the existing non-trawl groundfish conservation areas (GCAs), thereby increasing the overall potential economic value of the groundfish and non-tribal directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery. The actions are also needed to help diversify fishing strategies in light

of restrictive opportunities in other groundfish and non-groundfish fisheries, and to provide more stable, year-round fishing opportunity, expand opportunities to supply seafood, and increase potential financial benefit to fishermen, communities, and the infrastructures they support."

Other considerations

The GAP received information and a presentation from the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) and understands it could be considered in a separate action.

The GAP appreciates Oceana's support of the repeal of the CCA. However, we cannot support Oceana's proposed EFHCAs at:

1. Point Arena South Biogenic
2. The Football
3. Cochrane Bank (West of Farallon Islands)
4. Ascension Canyonhead
5. Monterey Canyon (West of Soquel Canyon)
6. La Cruz Canyon

In fairness, proposals of this nature should be taken up as a separate item, leveling the field for the various perspectives. Regulatory proposals that are *de facto* permanent closures should not be inserted as a condition of re-opening temporary fisheries closures initially established to serve stock rebuilding objectives as these objectives are attained. Furthermore, any suggested closures to protect habitat should be considered during the next groundfish EFH review process to ensure that all stakeholders (Federal and state-managed fisheries) are included in the public review process.

PFMC
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