

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS AND INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS - FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) worked closely with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to exchange information on the needs for inseason changes. The GAP would like to thank the GMT for the time they spent trying to create trip limits that will afford some fishing opportunity, particularly in California. Given the tight restrictions, the GMT's workload was challenging, and the GAP is grateful for their hard work.

Harvest Specifications Technical Corrections

The GAP reviewed the corrections to the 2023-2024 groundfish harvest specifications for canary, darkblotched, squarespot, yelloweye rockfish and yellowtail rockfish north. The GAP understands that there will be no changes to 2023 management but that these corrected values will have to be implemented in 2024 and will also be used to inform the 2025/2026 management specifications analysis. The GAP supports these corrected values but suggests the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) may want to consider a more refined review process so as to minimize future technical errors that reverberate through the process.

Whiting Cooperatives

Members of the GAP reviewed the inseason reports submitted by the three whiting cooperatives: the Whiting Mothership Cooperative (WMC), the Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative (PWCC), and the Shorebased Whiting Cooperative (SWC). The GAP notes that all participants in the mothership (MS) sector are members of WMC; all participants in the catcher processor (CP) sector are members of PWCC; and most whiting participants in the shorebased individual fishing quota (IFQ) sector are members of SWC - therefore, these reports cover spring bycatch management and fall fishing plans for all participants in each commercial whiting sector, with the exception of the handful of shorebased catcher vessels that are not members of SWC.

Chinook Salmon Bycatch

The GAP discussed Chinook salmon bycatch in the at-sea and shoreside whiting fisheries so far this year, and the GMT's inseason report ([Agenda Item G.8.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, September 2023](#)), which projected that between 8,503 Chinook¹ (77% of the guideline for whiting fisheries) and 11,870 Chinook² (108% of the guideline for whiting fisheries) may be caught in 2023 (see in Table 6 on page 10). Based on these projections and other information provided in the GMT report, the GAP considered whether a sector-specific block area closure (BAC) or other routine management measure that would take effect at a predetermined amount or rate may be appropriate for the fall as a deterrent. The GAP thinks the Chinook avoidance measures utilized by the whiting cooperatives will be more precise and effective tools than a blunt closure, and we

¹ Combining the low attainment at-sea scenario, max tribal estimate from the past five years, and scenario 1 in the shoreside fishery.

² Combining the average attainment at-sea scenario, max tribal estimate from the past five years, and scenario 2 in the shoreside fishery.

do not support a BAC at this time. If the Council were to consider a BAC at this meeting, the GAP requests it have very clear guidelines and be applied in a sector-specific manner.

With respect to the salmon mitigation plans (SMPs), the only commercial whiting participants who do not currently have an approved SMP are the handful of shorebased catcher vessels that are not members of SWC. Should the 11,000 Chinook guideline for whiting fisheries be exceeded, those non-coop vessels would not be able to access the 3,500 reserve. At this time, the GAP does not recommend any action to change that.

The GAP greatly appreciates the preliminary in-season Chinook assessment of ESU-specific impacts in Pacific hake trawl fisheries ([Agenda Item G.8.a, Supplemental REVISED NMFS Report 1, September 2023](#)) provided by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the work that was expedited by the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and West Coast Region (WCR) to provide such detailed genetic information at this meeting.

At-Sea Set-Asides

For set-asides shared by the at-sea whiting sectors, the GAP appreciated the Council discussion on this item at the June 2023 meeting to reiterate the expectations under set-aside management and hopes that discussion will continue at this meeting. We noted the differential bycatch between the MS and CP sectors across several set-aside species in 2023 (catch to date shown in Table 1, [Agenda Item G.8.a, Supplemental GMT Report 4, September 2023](#)), and reviewed the fall projections in the GMT's inseason report ([Agenda Item G.8.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, September 2023](#)). The GAP heard a request from an MS sector representative to ensure the continued fishing of the sector this fall. The GAP also received an update that the MS and CP sectors have met since the June Council meeting, and that some MS sector participants would like to pursue an intercoop agreement or policy with the CP sector. The at-sea sectors plan to meet to discuss this concept in advance of the 2024 season.

Similar to Chinook, the GAP considered a sector-specific BAC or other routine management measure for darkblotched rockfish, but we do not recommend it at this time for the same reasons as above, and per the GMT analysis there is not a projected risk of exceeding the ACL.

Routine Inseason Adjustments

Lingcod north of 42° N. lat.

The fixed gear industry has requested an increase in the lingcod trip limits north of 42° N lat. for the remainder of 2023. Fixed gear fishermen have noted that most of their entire allocation of lingcod has been taken during the first two weeks of the period thus has led to regulatory discards of lingcod. The GMT analysis suggests bycatch of yelloweye would increase only slightly (less than 0.04 mt.) with increased trip limits of lingcod in the north of 42° N lat. area. Effort increase is expected to be low due to the expected Dungeness crab season.

Open Access (OA)

The GAP supports GMT **Option 1**: Increase to 4,500 lb./month as soon as possible.

Limited Entry (LE)

The GAP supports GMT **Option 1**: Increase to 9,000 lb./2 months as soon as possible.

Sablefish North of 36° N. lat.

Fixed gear sablefish landings have been tracking quite low to date, thus, there is an opportunity to increase the daily trip limits for both LE and OA in the north. For those fishermen that have a buyer willing to purchase their sablefish, a trip limit increase would be greatly beneficial.

LE DTL

Working from the Supplemental GMT Report 5, table 1, the GAP recommends GMT **Option 2**: 9,000 lb./week, not to exceed 18,000 lb./2 months

OA DTL

Working from the Supplemental GMT Report 5, table 2, the GAP recommends GMT **Option 2**: 4,000 lb./not to exceed 8,000 lb./2 months

California Commercial Trip Limits

The GAP agrees with the GMT, as specified in Supplemental GMT Report 5, on all the other LE and OA trip limits, understanding no trip limit changes will be made south of 34° 27 N. lat.

Additional California Inseason Adjustments

The GAP recommends the Council adopt the two recommendations from [Agenda Item G.8.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 2](#):

- Prohibit take of quillback rockfish in the recreational and commercial fisheries off California.
- Close the nearshore recreational fishery in the Northern Groundfish Management Area (GMA), Mendocino GMA, San Francisco GMA, and Central GMA.

Transit

For California recreational fisheries, there are two issues at hand that the GAP is requesting clarification and action on. First is during the >50 fathoms season, the GAP is requesting clarity on an explicit exemption to stop/anchor in the nearshore with shelf and slope groundfish aboard, no hook and line deployed/gear stored. Second, within this scenario we are asking to have an explicit exemption for the use of the following gear types.

1. Hand dip net (as defined by CA for use of catching bait squid) Hoop net for lobster fishing (All of California)
2. Crab Trap for rockfish/crab combo (North of Conception)

Currently, CDFW transit provisions state:

TRANSIT PROVISION: Groundfish species or species groups that are closed to take and/or possession in part of a groundfish management area (state and federal Marine Protected Areas, or other closure areas) may be possessed aboard a vessel in transit through the closed area with no fishing gear deployed in the water (§27.20(b)(1)(A)).

As the California regulations read now, the proposed GAP requests would be prohibited. Because of this language, many of the Southern California multi-day groundfish fleet has had to cancel their overnight and multi day trips for the remainder of 2023 because they would not be able to safely anchor with shelf and slope groundfish species onboard. The alternative being only retaining one day of groundfish limits reducing the value of the two-day trip by half. As an example, combination crab and rockfish "combo" trips have traditionally been the lifeblood for the Northern California (North of 34° 27 N. lat.) CPFV fleet in November and December. Additionally, crab traps or hoop nets are deployed in shallower soft bottom habitat away from the rocky habitat where hook and line fishing for rockfish occurs.

The GAP requests the Council and NMFS consider these actions for the remainder of the 2023 season and provide any clarity or action, if possible, for one or both of the items.

PFMC
09/12/23