

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON ADOPT QUILLBACK REBUILDING ANALYSES, CATCH-ONLY PROJECTIONS, AND REVISED PROJECTIONS

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discussed the removal assumptions for 2023-24 for black rockfish in Oregon and quillback rockfish in California during the November 2023 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting. At the September 2023 Council meeting alternative removal assumptions for 2023-24 for each stock were put forth by the Council or state agency that differed from the GMT previously provided values. The GMT had a robust conversation about process and the reports provided by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW; [Agenda Item E.2.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, November 2023](#)) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW; [Agenda Item E.2.a, Supplemental ODFW Report 1, November 2023](#)) describing how the alternative recommendations were derived. **The GMT continues to recommend the original GMT values for both black rockfish in Oregon and quillback rockfish in California.** The GMT provides information on how this decision was reached below.

After the September Council meeting the GMT carefully reviewed the [PFMC Terms of Reference \(TOR\) for the Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Process for 2023-24](#). The TOR designates that removal assumptions during the projection period are to be provided by the GMT. In the future, if there are situations where State Agencies would like to propose alternative removal assumptions, these requests should be brought to the GMT for consideration.

California Quillback Rockfish

In August 2023, the GMT provided a removal estimate for 2024 of 10.62 mt based on available data in the most recent 2023 Groundfish Multiyear Report (GEMM, [Agenda Item G.1.b, NWFSR Report 1, September 2023](#); [Agenda Item E.2.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, November 2023](#)). The value provided by CDFW at the September Council meeting was 6.32 mt, lower than the GMT value, due to lower catch assumptions for the Open Access (OA) Sector and the Recreational fishery. The GMT received additional information from CDFW staff regarding how the alternative recommendation for 2024 was derived by CDFW. While potential Council action for 2024 is planned that aims to reduce interactions between the fishery and quillback rockfish, the GMT was unable to determine how the revised values aligned with potential management changes given the lack of detailed information in the CDFW Supplemental Report 1.

In the absence of inseason action regarding the scope and magnitude of management changes to be taken by the Council for 2024, the GMT concluded that it was pre-emptive to incorporate results of inseason actions at this meeting into assumptions of 2024 removals. Additionally, the TOR specifies that the GMT is tasked with providing removal assumptions, and alternatives should be brought through the GMT for review. The GMT was unable to endorse the CDFW provided value given the information currently available.

Oregon Black Rockfish

Given recent high attainment of black rockfish in Oregon, the GMT recommended removal assumptions equal to the annual catch limit of 512 mt for 2023-24 prior to, and reconfirmed those

values, during the July 2023 Stock Assessment Review Panel. Based on inseason catch data through August 2023, ODFW requested that new projections be conducted assuming 466 mt removals for both 2023-24. The GMT appreciates the information provided by ODFW on the factors driving lower catches of black rockfish in 2023, including bag limit changes for the longleader fishery and how those factors are likely to continue to impact the fishery in 2024. However, the GMT was unable to endorse the black rockfish removal assumption proposed by ODFW due to the misalignment with the TOR, the precedent that supporting this number may set for all future stock assessment cycles, and our concerns that the methodology described in [Supplemental ODFW Report 1](#) was not sufficient to determine how the proposed value was derived.

Summary

The GMT sees merit in the TOR outlining if/when it would be appropriate to incorporate revisions to removal assumptions based on values proposed by the Council or State Agencies and would ask that this be considered when TOR revisions next occur. Although both of these values were brought about for different reasons, the consensus in the GMT discussion was that in order for the GMT to diverge from their recommended number, a fully fleshed out rationale and methodology with how values were derived would be needed.

The GMT will continue to monitor landing and catch estimates as they become available in 2024 and 2025 to understand the realized mortality for both stocks. The GMT suggests that both stocks should be revisited for potential catch-only projections (or full assessment) to be conducted in 2025.

PFMC
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