

Clarification Regarding the 2025-2026 Canary Rockfish Alternative Harvest Control Rule (HCR) and the California stock of Copper Rockfish Annual Catch Target (ACT)

Summary of Questions

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff request clarification from the Council on two items:

- 1) Was the alternative canary rockfish alternative harvest control rule considered, but rejected?
- 2) Which sector(s) does the copper rockfish south of 34° 27' N. lat. annual catch target (ACT) apply?

Background

At the November 2023 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, the Council adopted, in part, the preliminary preferred alternative for alternative harvest control rules for the 2025-26 groundfish harvest specifications and a range of management measures (hereafter biennial process) for analysis over the winter. During the over-winter period, Council staff (staff) determined a need for clarity on two issues. Specifically, there are questions regarding the 2025-2026 canary rockfish alternative harvest control rule (HCR) and development of a California stock of copper rockfish ACT south of 34° 27' N. lat.

Canary Rockfish

Under November 2023 Agenda Item E.5, the Council considered alternative HCRs for canary rockfish, Dover sole, rex sole, shortspine thornyhead, and sablefish. The Motion:

“I move the Council adopt default HCRs for all species in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan, except for the three species listed below, as recommended by the GMT ([Agenda Item E.5.a, Supplemental GMT Report 2; Table 1](#)):

- Rex sole: Alt 1, $ACL = ABC P * 0.45$
- Shortspine thornyhead: $ACL < ABC P * 0.45$, 40-10 adjustment applied
- Dover sole: Alt 1: $ACL = ABC P * 0.45$ ”

And adopt the GMT recommended shortspine thornyhead apportionment method (5-year rolling average) for north and south of 34° 27' N. lat. ([Agenda Item E.5.a Supplemental GMT report 1](#)).”

Council staff and the GMT understood the motion to mean the alternative HCRs for rex sole, shortspine thornyhead, and Dover sole were adopted for analysis; whereas, only the default HCRs for all other managed groundfish species, including canary rockfish and sablefish, were adopted for analysis. However, under Agenda Item E.7 in November 2023, the Council made a specific motion to adopt the sablefish default HCR for analysis and reject the alternative HCR from further analysis. The Council did not do the same for canary rockfish, which is the source of confusion. Therefore, to ensure the intent of the E.5 motion was understood, clarity is needed.

Council staff requests the Council clarify if the canary rockfish default HCR was adopted for analysis and the alternative HCR was considered, but rejected, for further analysis.

Copper Rockfish

Under November 2023 Agenda Item E.7, the Council adopted a range of management measures for detailed analysis by the GMT during the over-winter period. One of the measures was to evaluate 1) removing the statewide ACT for copper rockfish off of California and 2) establish an ACT for copper rockfish south of 34° 27' N. lat. The portion of the Motion specific to the copper rockfish ACT:

“Action Item #4 ACT

Copper Rockfish – Evaluate removing statewide California copper rockfish ACT and establish an ACT south of Pt. Conception for the California stock. “

The Motion does not specify if the ACT is specific to sector(s). As the 2023-24 ACT is not specific to sector and Council staff considered that the ACT south of 34° 27' N. lat. would likewise apply to the aggregate commercial and recreational sector mortality. However, in discussing the ACT analysis with the GMT during the over-winter period, the California Department of Fish Wildlife (CDFW) members indicated that the ACT was intended to be specific to the recreational sector south of 34° 27' N. lat.

Council staff reviewed the November 2023 Council meeting Agenda Item E.7 [transcripts](#) to determine if Council discussion clearly identified if the ACT was to apply to just the recreational sector. Unfortunately, the transcripts, while detailing the need for the ACT south of 34° 27' N. lat., were unclear on sector specificity. To ensure the Council receives the correct analysis, clarity is needed.

Staff requests the Council provide clarification regarding the sector(s) for which the California stock of copper rockfish south of 34° 27' N. lat. ACT applies.

PFMC
02/09/2024