

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2025-2026: AREA MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND OFF-THE-TOP DEDUCTIONS

This report covers Item #1-3 from the Action Item Checklist ([Agenda Item F.5 Attachment 1, April 2024](#)). Items #4-10 (GMT Report #4) and Items #11-19 (GMT Report #5) will be in separate reports.

Summary of Recommendations

- *AIC #1 Updates to Selected Rockfish Conservation Area Coordinates: The GMT recommends adopting the proposed waypoint modifications to the 50 fathom (fm) RCA line as specified by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) in [Agenda Item F.5.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, April 2024](#) as Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).*
- *AIC #2 Off-the-top Deductions for Research, EFP, IOA, and Recreational:*
 - **Research Set-asides**
 - The GMT recommends the Council adopt the research set-asides for 2025-26 in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 as PPA.
 - **Incidental Open Access**
 - The GMT recommends adopting the IOA set-asides for 2025-26 in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 as PPA.
 - **Recreational Sablefish**
 - The GMT recommends a sablefish north of 36° N. lat. recreational set-aside of 30 mt as PPA (Appendix 3)
- *AIC #3 Off-the-top Deductions for Tribal Fisheries*
 - **Tribal Set-asides**
 - The GMT recommends the Council adopt the Tribal requested set-asides specified in [Agenda Item F.5.a Supplemental Tribal Report 1](#) as PPA

Action Item #1: Updates to Selected Rockfish Conservation Area Coordinates

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) was briefed on the proposed waypoint modifications to the 50 fathom (fm) Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) line between Pt. Arena and Bodega Bay as specified in [Agenda Item F.5.a Supplemental CDFW Report 1 April 2024](#). **The GMT recommends adopting the proposed waypoint modifications to the 50 fathom RCA line as specified by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as PPA.** Table 1 from the CDFW report is copied below for clarity. It is the GMT's understanding that the modifications

would better align with the 50 fm contour and would not create any crossovers with other RCA lines or create other enforcement complexity.

Table 1. Proposed 50-fathom waypoints for better alignment of the 50-fathom boundary line with the depth contour, near Bodega Bay, California. Directions of latitude and longitude coordinates provided below are North and West, respectively. Copied from Agenda Item F.5.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 1, April 2024.

Waypoint Number	Action	Old Lat. Degree	Old Lat. Minute	Old Long. Degree	Old Long. Minute	New Lat. Degree	New Lat. Minute	New Long. Degree	New Long. Minute
95	Move	39	30.12	123	52.92	39	32.47	123	52.25
96	Move	39	24.53	123	55.16	39	21.86	123	54.13
97	Move	39	11.58	123	50.93	39	8.35	123	49.67
98	Move	38	57.50	123	51.10	38	57.50	123	49.42
99	Move	38	55.13	123	51.14	38	51.20	123	46.09
100	Move	38	28.58	123	22.84	38	29.47	123	20.19

Action Item #2: Off-the-top Deductions for Research, Exempted Fishing Permits, Incidental Open Access, and Recreational

The fishery harvest guideline (HG) is the basis for setting allocations to the directed groundfish fisheries (e.g., trawl and non-trawl) and is the result of reducing the annual catch limit (ACL) to account for mortality in exempted fishing permits (EFPs), tribal, research, and non-directed groundfish fisheries (e.g., pink shrimp), also known as “off-the-top deductions.” Off-the-top deductions ensure that, together, the total mortality from directed and non-directed groundfish fisheries does not exceed the ACL. That each “off-the-top” sector stays within the sector-specific set-aside is less important, because management action is not required if they exceed their set-asides.

To minimize the risk of exceeding the ACL and given the lack of information on inseason mortality from research and incidental open access (IOA), off-the-top deductions are typically set liberally for each sector (i.e., higher than recent mortality trends). Setting more liberal off-the-top deductions does reduce the allocation to directed groundfish fisheries. However, these trade-offs are essential to simultaneously reduce the risk of exceeding the ACL and provide allocations for the directed fisheries. For most stocks where fishery attainments of the ACL are low, particularly those stocks that are targeted in groundfish fisheries, setting less liberal off-the-top deductions may provide benefits to directed groundfish fisheries without risking the ACL being exceeded in the event that mortality in off-the-top sectors exceeds the set-aside.

Research & Incidental Open Access Off-the-top Deductions

In past biennial cycles, the Council set research and IOA set-asides at long-term maximum or average historical (beginning in 2003) mortality values for most stocks. Upon review of the

mortality data, in November 2023 the GMT proposed using a ten-year rolling maximum to set the default IOA and research set-asides instead, which is more indicative of current mortality trends ([Agenda Item E.7.a, Supplemental GMT Report 2, November 2023](#)). The Council adopted this methodology for incorporation into overwinter analysis in November 2023. The default research and IOA set-asides for several stocks will therefore change from 2023-24 to 2025-26.

The GMT had discussion with the GAP where a request was made to reduce the 15.8 mt research set-aside for shortspine thornyhead north of 34° 27' N. lat. to the 2023 research set-aside of 10.4 mt. Upon further review of the Groundfish Expanded Multiyear Mortality (GEMM) report, the GMT determined that 15.8 mt is more representative of anticipated shortspine thornyhead mortality in the research sector.

The GMT recommends the Council adopt the off-the-top deductions for research and IOA as specified in Appendix 1 (2025) and Appendix 2 (2026) as PPA.

Exempted Fishing Permits

In November 2023, the Council considered EFPs under Agenda Item E.6. Based on Council action, two EFPs were forwarded for public review. As documented in [Agenda item E.6.a Supplemental GMT Report 1 November 2023](#), the GMT concluded that neither EFP application requested off-the-top deductions, and therefore no EFP mortality is proposed for 2025-26.

Recreational Sablefish

In November 2023, the GMT recommended a sablefish north of 36° N. lat. recreational set-aside of 30 mt, which would be an increase from the current set-aside of 6 mt. The full analysis is available in [Agenda item E.6.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, November 2023](#). The Council adopted these values for incorporation into the overwinter harvest specification analysis for 2025-26, and the resultant values are detailed in Appendix 1 (2025) and Appendix 2 (2026) of this report. Given the increasing interest from the recreational sector to target sablefish, this amount should accommodate the needs of this fishery. **The GMT recommends the Council adopt the 30 mt set-aside for recreational sablefish north of 36° N. lat. as specified in Appendix 3 as PPA.**

Action Item #3: Off-the-top Deductions for Tribal Set-Asides

Tribal Set-asides

For most stocks, a tribal set-aside is based on the request from the Tribes, which will allow them to manage the expected mortality in their upcoming fisheries. The GMT has been notified that the Tribes intend on continuing all of their existing groundfish fisheries for 2025 and 2026, and are modifying their preliminary set-aside requests from November for three species. Specifically, for petrale sole the request is decreasing from 350 mt to 290 mt; for yelloweye rockfish the request is increasing from 5 mt to 8 mt; and for starry flounder the tribes are adding in a request of 2 mt. The updated tribal set-aside requests and rationale are found in [Agenda Item F.5.a Supplemental Tribal Report 1, April 2024](#) and [Agenda Item F.5.a Supplemental Tribal Report 2, April 2024](#)

The GMT recommends the Council adopt the Tribal requested set-asides specified in [Agenda Item F.5.a Supplemental Tribal Report 1, April 2024](#) as PPA.

APPENDICES

Summary

Appendices 1 and 2 summarize off-the-top deductions relative to 2025 and 2026 ACLs and include the proposed tribal set-asides, research, and IOA off-the-top deductions as discussed above. Appendix 3 provides off-the-top deductions, including tribal, research, recreational, EFP set-asides, and the non-tribal commercial harvest guideline for sablefish north of 36° N. lat. These off-the-top deductions provide preliminary fishery HGs for Council consideration based on the Council’s final preferred selection of Harvest Control Rules under agenda item F2 of this meeting, and changes to the tribal set-asides as requested by the tribes.

Appendix 1: GMT recommended off-the-top deductions for tribal, research, EFPs, and IOA sectors for 2025.

Species	Area	ACL (mt)	Tribal (mt)	EFP (mt)	Research (mt)	IOA (mt)	Set-aside Sum (mt)	Fishery HG (mt)
QUILLBACK ROCKFISH ^{a/}	California	1.26	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	1.16
YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH	Coastwide	55.8	8	0	2.9	3.9	14.8	41
Arrowtooth flounder	Coastwide	11,193	2,041	0	13	41	2,095	9,098
Big skate	Coastwide	1,224	15	0	5.5	38.9	59.4	1,165
Black rockfish	Washington	245	18	0	0.6	0	18.6	226
Black rockfish	California	224	0	0	0.1	1.2	1.3	222.3
Bocaccio	S of 40°10' N. lat.	1,681	0	0	5.6	2.2	7.8	1,673
Cabazon	S of 42° N. lat.	161.8	0	0	0.6	0	0.6	161.2
California scorpionfish	S of 34°27' N. lat.	244	0	0	0.8	1.2	2	242
Canary rockfish	Coastwide	571.3	50	0	10.1	2.8	62.9	508.4
Chilipepper	S of 40°10' N. lat.	2,815	0	0	14.1	13.2	27.3	2,788
Cowcod	S of 40°10' N. lat.	76.6	0	0	10	0.1	10.1	66.5
Darkblotched rockfish	Coastwide	754	5	0	8.5	10.7	24.2	730
Dover sole	Coastwide	47,424	1,497	0	61.9	25.2	1,584.1	45,840
English sole	Coastwide	8,884	200	0	8	6.6	214.6	8,669
Lingcod	N of 40°10' N. lat.	3,631	250	0	17.7	13.4	281.1	3,350
Lingcod	S of 40°10' N. lat.	748	0	0	3.2	8.7	11.9	736
Longnose skate	Coastwide	1,616	220	0	14.7	15.9	250.6	1,365
Longspine thornyhead	N of 34°27' N. lat.	2,050	30	0	18.4	1.3	49.7	2,001
Longspine thornyhead	S of 34°27' N. lat.	648	0	0	1.3	0.2	1.5	646

Species	Area	ACL (mt)	Tribal (mt)	EFP (mt)	Research (mt)	IOA (mt)	Set-aside Sum (mt)	Fishery HG (mt)
Pacific cod	Coastwide	1,600	500	0	0.8	0.6	501.4	1,099
Pacific Ocean perch	N of 40°10' N. lat.	3,328	130	0	5.4	10.1	145.5	3,183
Pacific spiny dogfish	Coastwide	1,361	275	0	41.9	6.7	323.6	1,038
Pacific whiting ^{b/}	Coastwide	<i>b/</i>	TBD	0	750	1,500	2,250	TBD
Petrale sole	Coastwide	2,354	290	0	24.1	4.4	318.5	2,036
Sablefish	N of 36° N. lat.	28,688	See Appendix 3					
Sablefish	S of 36° N. lat.	7,857	0	0	2.3	25	27.3	7,830
Shortspine thornyhead	N of 34°27' N. lat.	576	50	0	15.8	4.4	70.2	506
Shortspine thornyhead	S of 34°27' N. lat.	240	0	0	0.5	1.3	1.8	238
Splitnose rockfish	S of 40°10' N. lat.	1,508	0	0	11.2	2.9	14.1	1,494
Starry flounder	Coastwide	392	2	0	0.6	14.1	16.7	375
Widow rockfish	Coastwide	11,237	200	0	17.3	1	218.3	11,019
Yellowtail rockfish	N of 40°10' N. lat.	6,241	1,000	0	20.6	4.5	1,025.1	5,216
Stock Complexes								
Nearshore rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	87.8	1.5	0	0.5	1.1	3.1	84.8
<i>Copper rockfish</i> ^{c/}	42° - 40°10' N. lat.	6.8	-	-	-	-	-	6.8
Nearshore rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	933.9	0	0	0.7	1.8	2.5	931.4
<i>Copper rockfish</i> ^{c/}	S of 40°10' N. lat.	125.1	-	-	-	-	-	125.1
Shelf rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	1,392	30	0	15.3	20.5	65.8	1,326
Shelf rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	1,465	0	0	15.1	11.5	26.6	1,439
Slope rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	1,488	36	0	10.5	11.5	58	1,430
Slope rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	693	0	0	18.2	0.9	19.1	674
Other fish	Coastwide	223	0	0	0.1	9.7	9.8	213
Other flatfish	Coastwide	7,974	60	0	23.6	87.7	171.3	7,803
<i>Rex sole</i> ^{d/}	Coastwide	4,550	-	-	-	-	-	4,550
Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish	Oregon	423.3	0	0	0.1	1.5	1.6	421.7
<i>Black rockfish</i> ^{e/}	Oregon	343.6	-	-	-	-	-	343.6
Oregon cabezon/kelp greenling	Oregon	176.9	0	0	0.1	0.7	0.8	176.1
Washington cabezon/kelp greenling	Washington	19.8	2	0	0.4	0	2.4	17.4

a/ Quillback rockfish was declared overfished by NMFS in December 2023

b/ Pacific whiting harvest limits are set through an annual bilateral treaty process external to the Council.

- c/ Copper rockfish is shown as it was assessed off California this cycle and it has stock definitions different than in past biennial cycles, i.e., Stocks north of and south of 42°. Neither stock ACLs are reduced by off-the-top set-asides.
- d/ Rex sole is shown as it was assessed this cycle. It is managed as part of the other flatfish complex and is not directly reduced by off-the-top set-asides.
- e/ Black rockfish is shown as it was assessed this cycle. It is managed as part of the other flatfish complex and its ACL contribution is not directly reduced by off-the-top set-asides.

Appendix 2: GMT recommended off-the-top deductions for tribal, research, EFPs, and IOA sectors for 2026.

Species	Area	ACL (mt)	Tribal (mt)	EFP (mt)	Research (mt)	IOA (mt)	Set-aside Sum (mt)	Fishery HG (mt)
QUILLBACK ROCKFISH ^{a/}	California	1.47	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	1.37
YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH	Coastwide	56.6	8	0	2.9	3.9	14.8	42.18
Arrowtooth flounder	Coastwide	9,227	2,041	0	13	41	2,095	7,132
Big skate	Coastwide	1,188	15	0	5.5	38.9	59.4	1,129
Black rockfish	Washington	241.2	18	0	0.6	0	18.6	222.6
Black rockfish	California	235.7	0	0	0.1	1.2	1.3	234.4
Bocaccio	S of 40°10' N. lat.	1,668	0	0	5.6	2.2	7.8	1,660
Cabazon	S of 42° N. lat.	155.1	0	0	0	0.6	0.6	154.5
California scorpionfish	S of 34°27' N. lat.	238	0	0	0.8	1.2	2	236
Canary rockfish	Coastwide	572.5	50	0	10.1	2.8	62.9	509.6
Chilipepper	S of 40°10' N. lat.	2,642.5	0	0	14.1	13.2	27.3	2,615.2
Cowcod	S of 40°10' N. lat.	75.3	0	0	10	0.1	10.1	65.2
Darkblotched rockfish	Coastwide	732	5	0	8.5	10.7	24.2	707.8
Dover sole	Coastwide	42,457	1497	0	61.9	25.2	1,584.1	40,873
English sole	Coastwide	8,819	200	0	8	6.6	214.6	8,604
Lingcod	N of 40°10' N. lat.	3,534	250	0	17.7	13.4	281.1	3,253
Lingcod	S of 40°10' N. lat.	773.4	0	0	3.2	8.7	11.9	761.5
Longnose skate	Coastwide	1,579	220	0	14.7	15.9	250.6	1,328
Longspine thornyhead	N of 34°27' N. lat.	1,957	30	0	18.4	1.3	49.7	1,907
Longspine thornyhead	S of 34°27' N. lat.	618	0	0	1.3	0.2	1.5	617
Pacific cod	Coastwide	1,600	500	0	0.8	0.6	501.4	1,099
Pacific Ocean perch	N of 40°10' N. lat.	3,220	130	0	5.4	10.1	145.5	3,075
Pacific spiny dogfish	Coastwide	1,318	275	0	41.9	6.7	323.6	994
Pacific whiting ^{b/}	Coastwide	TBD	TBD	0	750	1,500	2,250	TBD
Petrале sole	Coastwide	2,238	2,90	0	24.1	4.4	318.5	1,920
Sablefish	N of 36° N. lat.	27,238	See Appendix 3					
Sablefish	S of 36° N. lat.	7,460	0	0	2.3	25	27.3	7,433
Shortspine thornyhead	N of 34°27' N. lat.	582	50	0	15.8	4.4	70.2	511.8

Species	Area	ACL (mt)	Tribal (mt)	EFP (mt)	Research (mt)	IOA (mt)	Set-aside Sum (mt)	Fishery HG (mt)
Shortspine thornyhead	S of 34°27' N. lat.	242	0	0	0.5	1.3	1.8	240.2
Splitnose rockfish	S of 40°10' N. lat.	1,469	0	0	11.2	2.9	14.1	1,455
Starry flounder	Coastwide	392	2	0	0.6	14.1	16.7	375
Widow rockfish	Coastwide	10,392	200	0	17.3	1	218.3	10,174
Yellowtail rockfish	N of 40°10' N. lat.	6,023	1,000	0	20.6	4.5	1,025.1	4,998
Stock Complexes								
Nearshore rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	86.1	1.5	0	0.5	1.1	3.1	83
<i>Copper rockfish</i> ^{c/}	42°- 40°10' N. lat.	15.8	-	-	-	-	-	15.8
Nearshore rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	932.8	0	0	0.7	1.8	2.5	930.3
<i>Copper rockfish</i> ^{c/}	South of 42° N. lat.	126.3	-	-	-	-	-	126.3
Shelf rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	1,378	30	0	15.3	20.5	65.8	1,312
Shelf rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	1,463	0	0	15.1	11.5	26.6	1,436
Slope rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	1,460	36	0	10.5	11.5	58	1,402
Slope rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	690	0	0	18.2	0.9	19.1	671
Other fish	Coastwide	223	0	0	0.1	9.7	9.8	213
Other flatfish	Coastwide	7,144	60	0	23.6	87.7	171.3	6,973
<i>Rex sole</i> ^{d/}	Coastwide	3,719	-	-	-	-	-	3,719
Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish	Oregon	428.1	0	0	0.1	1.5	1.6	426.5
<i>Black rockfish</i> ^{e/}	Oregon	350.5	-	-	-	-	-	350.5
Oregon cabezon/kelp greenling	Oregon	174.4	0	0	0.1	0.7	0.8	173.6
Washington cabezon/kelp greenling	Washington	17.1	2	0	0.4	0	2.4	14.7

a/ Quillback rockfish was declared overfished by NMFS in December 2023.

b/ Pacific whiting harvest limits are set through an annual bilateral treaty process external to the Council.

c/ Copper rockfish is shown as it was assessed off California this cycle and it has stock definitions different than in past biennial cycles, i.e., Stocks north of and south of 42°. Neither stock ACLs are reduced by off-the-top set-asides.

d/ Rex sole is shown as it was assessed this cycle. It is managed as part of the other flatfish complex and is not directly reduced by off-the-top set-asides.

e/ OR Black rockfish is shown as it was assessed this cycle. It is managed as part of the OR black/blue/deacon complex and its ACL contribution is not directly reduced by off-the-top set-asides.

Appendix 3: 2025 and 2026 tribal, research, recreational (Rec.), EFP set-asides, and the non-tribal commercial harvest guideline for sablefish north of 36° N. lat. in metric tons (mt)

Copied from [Agenda Item F.5 Attachment 2](#) Chapter 1, Alternative 1, Section 2.2 ACL Deductions (Set-Asides) Recreational Sablefish Set-Aside.

Year	ACL (mt)	Tribal (mt)	Research (mt)	Rec. (mt)	EFP (mt)	Set-Aside Sum (mt)	Non-Tribal Commercial HG (mt)
2025	28,688	2,869	59.3	30	0	2,958	25,729
2026	27,238	2,724	59.3	30	0	2,813	24,425