

**GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON 2025-2026 MANAGEMENT
 MEASURES PPA: ANNUAL CATCH TARGETS, ALLOCATIONS, HARVEST
 GUIDELINES, SHARES, AND AT-SEA SET-ASIDES**

This report covers items #4-10 from the Action Item Checklist (AIC; [Agenda Item F.5, REVISED Attachment 1, April 2024](#)). Items #1-3 ([Agenda Item F.5.a, Supplemental GMT Report 4, April 2024](#)) and items #11-20 (GMT Report 5) will be in separate reports.

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Summary of Recommendations

The Groundfish Management Team recommends the following as the primary preferred alternative, where applicable. (GMT)

- **AIC #4 Annual catch targets (ACTs):**
 - *Yelloweye rockfish*: **Remove the ACT for non-trawl fisheries, including sector-specific ACTs for the commercial non-trawl and recreational sectors.**
 - *California quillback rockfish*: **Remove the ACT.**
 - *Recreational copper rockfish south of 34° 27' N. lat.:*
 - **Remove the statewide ACT and create the within non-trawl recreational ACT proposed under Alternative 1 (Option 3).**
 - **Accountability measures: If the ACT is exceeded, or projected to be exceeded, the Council will consider management measures to mitigate impacts and determine if inseason adjustments are necessary (Sub-Option 1).**
 - *Shortspine thornyhead*: See AIC #19d
- **AIC #5: Two-year trawl/non-trawl allocations:**
 - *Canary rockfish*: No recommendation.
 - *Widow rockfish*: **Set the non-trawl allocation at 300 mt, with the remainder allocated to the trawl sector (Option 2).**
 - *Petrale sole*: **Status quo trawl/non-trawl allocations.**
- **AIC #6: Rebuilding/overfished species allocations:**
 - *Yelloweye rockfish*: **Adopt status quo proportions for trawl/non-trawl allocations (8 percent and 92 percent, respectively).**
 - *California quillback rockfish*: **Formal allocations and/or sector specific shares for the ACL are not needed.**
- **AIC #8 Harvest guidelines/state shares for stocks in a complex:**
 - *Blackgill rockfish (within the slope rockfish complex south of 40° 10' N. lat.):* **Continue to use the allocation scheme established in the 2021-22 biennium.**
 - *Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish complex:* **There is not a need for harvest guidelines for the species within the Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish complex.**
 - *Cabazon/kelp greenling complexes in Washington and Oregon:* **There is not a need for harvest guidelines for either species within the Oregon cabazon/kelp greenling complex or the Washington cabazon/kelp greenling complex.**
- **AIC #9: At-sea set-asides:**
 - *Arrowtooth flounder*: **100 mt (Option 2).**
 - *Canary rockfish*: **20 mt (Option 3).**
 - *Darkblotched rockfish*: **100 mt (Option 2).**
 - *Other Flatfish complex*: **100 mt (Option 2).**
 - *Sablefish north of 36° N. lat.:* **429 mt (Option 3).**

- *Shortspine thornyhead north of 34° 27' N. lat.:* **70 mt (Option 1 Status Quo).**
- *Widow rockfish:* **300 mt (Option 2).**
- *Yellowtail rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat.:* **360 mt (Option 2).**
- *Other species with only one option:* **Option 1 Status Quo.**
- **AIC #10: Within non-trawl harvest guidelines/shares:**
 - *Yelloweye rockfish:* **Status quo harvest guidelines.**
 - *Nearshore rockfish complex north of 40° 10' N. lat.:* **Continue to use the status quo sharing arrangement.**
 - *Sablefish south of 36° N. lat.:*
 - **Continue with the status quo 70-30 percent formal sharing arrangement between limited entry fixed gear and open access in 2025-26.**
 - **Recreational set-aside: Option 2 (10 mt).**
 - *Bocaccio south of 40° 10' N. lat.:* **Status quo harvest guideline sharing arrangement.**
 - *Cowcod south of 40° 10' N. lat.:* **Status quo harvest guideline sharing arrangement.**

Action Item #4: Annual Catch Targets

Yelloweye Rockfish Annual Catch Target

Yelloweye rockfish is a prohibited species in all fixed gear groundfish fisheries, where more than 95 percent of mortality occurs. It is currently managed with a non-trawl ACT set at 78.4 percent of the non-trawl allocation, and sector-specific ACTs under the non-trawl allocation are also set at 78.4 percent of their respective sector-specific HGs (Table 1). The majority of commercial non-trawl mortality is discarded, and therefore, commercial non-trawl inseason estimates are largely year-end projections that do not have data-informed estimates of discards until September of the following year when the Groundfish Expanded Mortality Multiyear (GEMM) report is available. Additionally, pre-season management measures of any non-trawl sector are not expected to be different with or without the ACT. For these reasons, **the GMT recommends the Council adopt removing the yelloweye rockfish ACT for non-trawl fisheries, including sector-specific ACTs for the commercial non-trawl and recreational sectors, as PPA.** Removing the yelloweye rockfish ACT would reduce management complexity with no negative impact to the fisheries or stock. The current suite of recreational monitoring methods for yelloweye rockfish provide timely updates to recreational fishery managers to respond to sector specific HGs.

Table 1. Status quo yelloweye rockfish allocations, HGs, and annual catch targets (ACT) for 2025 and 2026 under status quo allocations in metric tons (mt) based on updated off-the-top deductions.

Year	2025 (mt)	2026 (mt)
ABC	87.2	88.5
ACL	56	57
Off-the-Top Deduction	14.8	14.8
Fishery HG	41.2	42.2
Trawl (8%)	3.3	3.4

Year	2025 (mt)		2026 (mt)	
<i>At-Sea</i>	-		-	
<i>IFQ</i>	3.3		3.4	
Non-trawl (92%)	HG	ACT	HG	ACT
	37.9	29.7	38.8	30.4
<i>Non-nearshore / Nearshore (20.9%)</i>	7.9	6.2	8.1	6.4
<i>WA Rec (25.6%)</i>	9.7	7.6	9.9	7.8
<i>OR Rec (23.3%)</i>	8.8	6.9	9.0	7.1
<i>CA Rec (30.2%)</i>	11.4	9.0	11.7	9.2

Quillback Rockfish Annual Catch Target

The California quillback rockfish ACT was originally designed as a mechanism to monitor quillback rockfish mortality relative to its component mortality of the nearshore complex ACL. Now that the Council has removed California quillback rockfish from the nearshore complex, mortality will be monitored against its species-specific harvest guidelines. Due to low harvest limits, there is little value in setting an ACT lower than the ACL because the small difference in an ACL to ACT will not give the Council a timely warning to reduce mortality to avoid exceeding the ACL. **Therefore, the GMT recommends the Council adopt removing the ACT for California quillback rockfish as PPA.**

Copper Rockfish Recreational Annual Catch Target South of 34° 27' N. Lat.

- Option 1 (Status Quo): A copper rockfish south of 34° 27' N. lat. ACT would not be established for the recreational sector. The statewide California, all sector, copper rockfish ACTs that are set equal to the area-specific ACL contributions to each nearshore rockfish complex off of California would remain in effect.
- Option 2: The recreational ACT would be set at 80 percent of the proportion of California copper rockfish stock's ACL south of 34° 27' N lat., as determined by the assessment (i.e., 2025 = 12.64 mt, 2026 = 14.4 mt).
- Option 3: The recreational ACT would be equal to the proportion of California copper rockfish stock's ACL south of 34° 27' N lat., as determined by the assessment (i.e., 2025 = 15.8 mt, 2026 = 18.0 mt).
 - Sub-Option 1. If the copper rockfish south of 34°27' N. lat. ACT is exceeded, or projected to be exceeded, the Council will consider management measures to mitigate impacts on copper rockfish south of 34°27' N. lat. and determine if inseason adjustments are necessary.
 - Sub-Option 2. If the copper rockfish south of 34°27' N. lat. ACT is exceeded, or projected to be exceeded, the Council will adopt inseason actions (e.g., depth limits, bag limits, etc.) best suited to mitigate impact on the sub-area population of copper rockfish.

The GMT recommends the Council adopt the removal of the statewide copper rockfish ACT and the creation of a within non-trawl recreational ACT south of 34° 27' N lat. as proposed under [Alternative 1, Agenda Item F.5 REVISED Attachment 2, April 2024](#) (Council

Analytical Document Section 2.3.3 - Option 3) as PPA. Option 3 would create a non-trawl copper rockfish ACT for the recreational sector south of 34° 27' N. lat. to address localized depletion indicated by the 2023 assessment. **For proposed additional accountability measures the GMT recommends Sub-Option 1 as PPA, which calls for the Council to consider management measures to mitigate impacts on copper rockfish south of 34° 27' N lat. if the ACT is exceeded.**

Shortspine Thornyhead Annual Catch Target

The new management measure that considers removal of the management line at 34° 27' N lat. for shortspine thornyhead (AIC #19d) contains sub-option 2 under decision 2b that would add an ACT to the non-trawl sector north of 34° 27' N lat. Any recommendations associated with the new management measure to remove the management line will be discussed under AIC #19d.

Action Item #5: Two-Year Trawl/Non-Trawl Allocations

Off-the-top deductions have changed for yelloweye rockfish and petrale sole. Each of these species have trawl/non-trawl allocations. The updated trawl and non-trawl allocations for those two species are shown in Table 2 below. Updated IFQ catch projections will be provided in June 2024 based on these and other updates to trawl allocations.

Table 2. Two year trawl and non-trawl allocation percentages and amounts (mt) in 2025-2026 based on updates to harvest specifications and off-the-top deductions as of April 8, 2024.

Species Category	Year	Fishery HG (mt)	Trawl		Non-Trawl	
			%	mt	%	mt
YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH	2025	41.2	8	3.3	92	37.9
	2026	42.2	8	3.4	92	38.8
Petrale sole	2025	2,036	-	2,006	-	30
	2026	1,920	-	1,890	-	30

Canary Rockfish

The GMT did not reach a consensus on a recommendation for PPA from one of the canary allocation options analyzed under this AIC #5 (trawl or non-trawl allocation) or AIC #10 (within non-trawl HGs/shares); however, we recommend reducing the at-sea set-aside from 36 mt to 20 mt (AIC #9). Based on our analysis, the GMT was not able to identify a suitable reallocation outside of the at-sea set-aside reduction. The canary rockfish ACLs are dropping by roughly 55 percent in 2025-26, and the team thinks these reductions should impact the various groundfish fisheries equitably.

Widow Rockfish

The GMT analyzed the following three options to set the widow rockfish trawl/non-trawl allocations for 2025-26 in Chapter 1, Section 2.7 of the Council Analytical Document ([Agenda Item F.5, REVISED Attachment 2, April 2024](#)):

- Option 1 (Status Quo): a fixed 400 mt of the fishery HG is allocated to the non-trawl sector and the remainder is allocated to trawl.
- Option 2: a fixed 300 mt of the fishery HG is allocated to the non-trawl sector and the remainder is allocated to trawl.
- Option 3: a fixed 200 mt of the fishery HG is allocated to the non-trawl sector and the remainder is allocated to trawl.

The GMT recommends the Council select Option 2 as PPA to set the non-trawl allocation for widow rockfish at 300 mt, with the remainder allocated to the trawl sector. This option would provide some relief to the IFQ sector under declining widow rockfish allocations while attempting to avoid future constraints in the non-trawl fishery as management changes potentially force effort shifts in that fishery.

Petrale Sole

In March 2024, the Council instructed the GMT to discontinue any further analysis of petrale sole allocations. The preliminary analysis we conducted prior to March is provided in the Council Analytical Document ([Agenda Item F.5 REVISED Attachment 2, April 2024](#)), and due to the Council’s guidance, the GMT did not develop any options that would diverge from status quo. Given that status quo is the only option at this time, **the GMT recommends the Council select status quo petrale sole trawl/non-trawl allocations as PPA.**

Action Item #6: Rebuilding/Overfished Species Allocations

Rebuilding Species

Yelloweye Rockfish

In recent years, yelloweye rockfish has been allocated 8 percent to the trawl fisheries and 92 percent to the non-trawl fisheries. Table 3 shows the recent years’ allocations, mortality, and sector-specific percentages of the total directed groundfish mortality. Historical mortality in the trawl sector is 0.03-0.80 mt, which is lower than the expected 2025-26 trawl allocations of 3.3-3.4 mt. The non-trawl mortality has ranged from 7.9-28.6 mt, which is lower than the expected 2025-26 non-trawl allocations of 37.9-38.8 mt. Therefore, the GMT does not expect status quo yelloweye rockfish allocation proportions to be a further constraint to either the trawl or non-trawl fisheries in 2025-26. **The GMT recommends the council adopt status quo yelloweye rockfish proportions for trawl/non-trawl allocations (8 percent and 92 percent, respectively) as PPA.**

Table 3. Yelloweye rockfish allocations and mortality statistics (mt) from 2011-2026. Status quo allocations are 8 percent trawl and 92 percent non-trawl. The fishery HG (and resulting calculations) will be updated once draft off-the-top deductions are finalized.

Year	ACL (mt)	Fishery HG (mt)	Total Directed Groundfish Mortality (mt)	Trawl				Non-Trawl			
				Sector Alloc. (mt)	Sector Mort. (mt)	Sector attain.	% of total directed GF mort. (mt)	Sector Alloc. (mt)	Sector Mort. (mt)	Sector attain.	% of total directed GF mort. (mt)
2011	17.0	11.1	8.5	0.6	0.1	10%	1%	10.5	8.4	80%	99%
2012	17.0	11.1	10.4	0.6	0.0	5%	0%	10.5	10.3	98%	100%
2013	18.0	12.2	9.1	1.0	0.1	6%	1%	11.2	9.0	81%	99%
2014	18.0	12.2	8.0	1.0	0.1	10%	1%	11.2	7.9	70%	99%
2015	18.0	12.2	11.1	1.0	0.0	4%	0%	11.2	11.1	99%	100%
2016	19.0	13.2	8.8	1.1	0.1	5%	1%	12.1	8.8	73%	99%
2017	20.0	14.6	17.1	1.1	0.2	15%	1%	13.1	16.9	129%	99%
2018	20.0	14.0	16.2	1.1	0.1	11%	1%	12.9	16.1	124%	99%
2019	48.0	41.9	19.9	3.4	0.5	15%	3%	38.6	19.4	50%	97%
2020	49.0	42.9	15.0	3.4	0.4	12%	3%	39.5	14.6	37%	97%
2021	50.0	41.2	16.2	3.3	0.5	14%	3%	37.9	15.7	42%	97%
2022	51.0	42.2	29.4	3.4	0.8	24%	3%	38.8	28.6	74%	97%
2023	52.0	41.6		3.33				38.3			
2024	53.0	42.6		3.41				39.2			
2025	56.0	44.0		3.5				40.5			
2026	57.0	44.8		3.6				41.2			

*Note the trawl and non-trawl allocations do not always sum to the fishery HG in years where the Council included a management buffer.

California Quillback Rockfish

At this time, **the GMT does not see a need to create formal allocations, and/or sector-specific shares for the small California quillback rockfish ACL.**

Action Item #7: Amendment 21 Trawl/Non-Trawl Allocations

The Council has the ability to amend the Fishery Management Plan to remove or adjust the Amendment 21 (A-21) formulas, found in Table 6-1 of the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP (see page 64), used to set trawl and non-trawl allocations for some stocks. A-21 allocations can also be adjusted during the Trawl Catch Share Program and Intersector Allocation Review, which is scheduled to begin scoping in June 2024 ([Agenda Item C.8, Attachment 1, November 2023](#)).

This pathway would require amending the allocations in Table 6-1 of the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP (see page 64) but would maintain it as a species with an FMP-specified allocation. Additionally, the Council could consider converting shortspine thornyhead to a 2-year allocation species that is only specified in regulations. However, the Council can revisit both FMP-specified allocations and 2-year allocations at its discretion.

The Council adopted Alternative 2 harvest specifications for Amendment 21 allocations for Dover sole, shortspine thornyhead, and rex sole (which is part of the other flatfish complex). The table below shows the resulting allocations from those harvest specifications. Off-the-top deductions have also changed for starry flounder, which results in a slightly lower allocations for trawl/non-trawl. Table 4 shows the updated trawl and non-trawl allocations in 2025-26 for these species categories.

Table 4. Amendment 21 trawl and non-trawl allocation percentages and amounts (mt) in 2025-2026 based on updates to harvest specifications and off-the-top deductions as of April 8, 2024.

Species Category	Year	Fishery HG (mt)	Trawl		Non-Trawl	
			%	mt	%	mt
Dover sole	2025	45,840	95	43,548	5	2,292
	2026	40,873	95	38,829	5	2,044
Shortspine thornyhead N. a/	2025	506	95	480.7	5	25.3
	2026	512	95	486.2	5	25.6
Shortspine thornyhead S. a/	2025	238	-	50	-	188
	2026	240.2	-	50	-	190.2
Other Flatfish Complex	2025	7,803	90	7,023	10	780.3
	2026	6,973	90	6,276	10	697.3
Starry flounder	2025	375	50	187.5	50	187.5
	2026	375	50	187.5	50	187.5

a/Status Quo Shortspine Thornyhead Management Line at 34° 27' N. Lat.

Shortspine Thornyhead North and South of 34° 27' N. Lat.

In March 2023, the Council tasked the GMT with analysis of a new management measure that would remove the 34° 27' N. lat. management line (AIC #19d). This new management measure proposal was in response to the GMT's overwinter analysis, which revealed that lower ACLs for shortspine thornyhead would cause constraints for both the trawl and non-trawl sectors north of 34° 27' N. lat. in the 2025-26 biennium. At this meeting the GMT submitted analyses for a new management measure that would remove the 34° 27' N. lat. management line (see [Agenda Item F.5.a Supplemental GMT Report 2](#), April 2024). If the Council chooses to move forward with this new management measure, shortspine thornyhead allocations would no longer be structured according to their A-21 formulas but would maintain it as a species with an FMP-specified allocation. The Council could consider whether or not to keep shortspine thornyhead allocations as FMP-specified or change them to a 2-year structure (i.e., re-specified in regulation with each biennial cycle as opposed to in the FMP).

Action Item #8: Harvest Guidelines/State Shares for Stocks in a Complex

Blackgill Rockfish (within the slope rockfish complex south of 40° 10' N. lat.)

The allocation scheme for blackgill rockfish established in the 2021-22 biennium, although complicated, seems to meet the needs of trawl and non-trawl sectors, **and therefore the GMT recommends the Council adopt this approach for the 2025-26 biennium as PPA.**

Oregon Black/Blue/Deacon Rockfish Complex

The Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish complex was created in 2019. At that time there were discussions about species-specific harvest guidelines within the complex. The goal was to prevent overfishing of the species-specific contribution to the complex while also providing a buffer against the species-specific ACL for Oregon black rockfish. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) will continue to manage the complex to stay within the species-specific contributions to the complex, though in 2022 the species-specific ACL contribution (512 mt) was exceeded for black rockfish by 14.7 mt (Table 5), but remained well within the black/blue/deacon rockfish complex ACL (599.5 mt). In that year ODFW took inseason action on Sep 6, 2022 to lower the recreational bag limit from five to four in an effort to stay within the black rockfish ACL contribution with minimal disruption to the recreational fishery. Therefore, **the GMT does not see a need for harvest guidelines for the species within the Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish complex.**

Table 5. - Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish complex total mortality from 2019-2023. The Oregon black rockfish species-specific contribution was 512 mt from 2019-2023. Years where mortality exceeded the species-specific contribution are shown in italics. Source GEMM (2019-2022); RecFIN (2023)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Oregon black/blue/deacon	465.1	463.3	466.8	562.7	468.3
<i>Black rockfish</i>	438.3	436.3	440.6	<i>526.7</i>	416.8
<i>Blue/deacon rockfish</i>	26.8	27.0	26.2	36.0	51.5

Cabazon/Kelp Greenling Complexes in Washington and Oregon

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and ODFW manage their respective cabazon/kelp greenling complexes to stay within species-specific contributions. During the two years for which total mortality data is available, the mortality of both species in the Oregon complex and Washington complex have remained below the species-specific contributions to the OFL, ABC, and ACLs. Similar to the Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish complex, **the GMT does not see a need for harvest guidelines for either species within the Oregon cabazon/kelp greenling complex or the Washington cabazon/kelp greenling complex.**

Action Item #9: At-Sea Set-Asides

At-sea set-asides are taken from the trawl allocation to accommodate bycatch in the at-sea whiting fishery; the remainder of the trawl allocations are allocated to the IFQ fishery. In our November

2023 report ([Agenda Item F.7.a, Supplemental GMT Report 3, November 2023](#)), as well as in Section 1.1 of the Council Analytical Document ([Agenda Item F.5, REVISED Attachment 2, April 2024](#)), the GMT described the purpose of at-sea set-asides and tradeoffs that should be weighed when deciding an amount to set them at.

The at-sea set-aside options for 2025-26 are shown in Table 6. The GMT conducted bootstrap simulation analysis to estimate the risk of exceeding the set-aside amounts under these options based on at-sea mortality data from 2002 to 2023, which is detailed in Section 2.2 of the Council Analytical Document ([Agenda Item F.5.a, REVISED Attachment 2, April 2024](#)). In the Council Analytical Document, the No Action description of the at-sea fishery also describes likely drivers of recent set-aside exceedances. For example, the recent increase in shortspine thornyhead mortality appears to be largely driven by setting midwater trawl gear closer to the seafloor than in prior years. **For all species categories in Table 6 with only one option (i.e., Option 1, Status Quo), the GMT recommends the Council adopt Option 1 (Status Quo) as PPA.** For all other species categories, recommendations are provided in species-specific sections below.

Table 6. Range of at-sea set-aside options (mt) for the 2025-26 biennium by species category. Bolded options are GMT recommendations for selection of PPA.

Species Category	Option 1 Status Quo	Option 2	Option 3
Arrowtooth flounder	70	100	-
Canary rockfish	36	30	20
Darkblotched rockfish	76.4	100	150
Dover sole	10	-	-
Lingcod north of 40° 10' N. lat.	15	-	-
Longnose skate	5	-	-
Other flatfish	35	100	-
Pacific halibut	10	-	-
Pacific ocean perch	300	-	-
Petrale sole	5	-	-
Sablefish north of 36° N. lat.	100	300	429
Shelf rockfish complex north of 40° 10' N. lat.	35	-	-
Slope rockfish complex north of 40° 10' N. lat.	300	-	-
Shortspine thornyhead north of 34° 27' N. lat.	70	100	50
Widow rockfish	476	300	-
Yellowtail rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat.	320	360	450

Arrowtooth Flounder and Other Flatfish

The at-sea set-asides for arrowtooth flounder and the Other Flatfish complex were exceeded in 2022, so the Council is considering options that would increase them to 100 mt each. In the Council Analytical Document, the GMT notes that, “Option 2 for both arrowtooth flounder and Other Flatfish would better accommodate anomalous bycatch years in the at-sea whiting fishery than Option 1 Status Quo without impacting IFQ participants, since the IFQ fishery attains less than 15

percent of their allocations, each year.” **The GMT recommends the Council adopt the Option 2 at-sea set-aside of 100 mt for both arrowtooth flounder and the Other Flatfish complex as PPA.**

Canary Rockfish

Canary rockfish allocation reductions are expected to constrain IFQ vessels in 2025-26. The status quo at-sea set-aside for canary rockfish is 36 mt. At-sea mortality was less than 7 mt in all years prior to 2023, but in 2023 the sectors caught 20.1 mt of canary rockfish. This is the basis for developing Option 3 of 20 mt, and the GMT also provided Option 2 of 30 mt to include a more moderate reduction in the range. With only one year of mortality higher than 7 mt, it is difficult to estimate what at-sea mortality will be in 2025-26, but given that 20 mt is the sector’s historical maximum mortality, and given that IFQ vessels could economically benefit from the additional 16 mt, **the GMT recommends the Council adopt the Option 3 at-sea set-aside of 20 mt for canary rockfish as PPA.**

Darkblotched Rockfish

The status quo darkblotched rockfish set-aside of 70 mt was exceeded in both 2022 and 2023. The GMT’s overwinter analysis indicates that this is potentially driven by the at-sea sectors fishing closer to the seafloor in an attempt to seek out Pacific whiting aggregations and avoid young sablefish, which tend to occupy the middle of the water column. The analysis also indicates that this behavior of fishing closer to the seafloor leads to higher shortspine thornyhead encounter rates as well. Option 2 (100 mt) is comparable to the sectors’ maximum historical mortality of 100.5 mt in 2023. The GMT has concerns about Option 3 (150 mt) and whether relaxing the darkblotched rockfish set-aside above their recent maximum mortality could lead to higher shortspine thornyhead encounters. However, the team does see a need to increase the set-aside to account for the increasing trend in at-sea mortality in recent years. **Therefore, the GMT recommends the Council adopt the Option 2 at-sea set-aside of 100 mt for darkblotched rockfish as PPA.** Assuming recent average attainment of Pacific whiting allocations in both sectors, a set-aside of 100 mt is estimated to be at risk of exceedance every 1 in 10 years, but the risk could realistically be higher if the sectors continue to fish relatively close to the seafloor to seek out Pacific whiting aggregations. The risk is slightly higher if the sectors fish predominantly off of Washington, but the difference is minimal.

Sablefish North of 36° N. lat.

In November 2023, the GAP recommended adding Option 3 of 429 mt to the range for analysis, which was calculated as at-sea catches through November 2023 (158.3 mt) multiplied by the percent increase in the sablefish ACLs (271 percent). The GMT considers this a reasonable method of calculating an increase to the set-aside and does not expect this to impact the IFQ fishery’s ability to access sablefish quota pounds given the scale of allocation increases in 2025-26. With large recent year classes in 2020 and 2021, sablefish bycatch has increased in the at-sea sectors, and there is the potential for an additional large year class in 2023, making it difficult to predict how sablefish bycatch will change over the next several years. A set-aside of 429 mt would accommodate the sectors’ maximum mortality while accounting for the potential for increased encounters. **Therefore, the GMT recommends the Council adopt the Option 3 at-sea set-aside of 429 mt for sablefish north of 36° N. lat as PPA.**

Shortspine Thornyhead North of 34° 27' N. lat.

The status quo shortspine thornyhead set-aside of 70 mt was exceeded by 175 mt in 2022 and by 29 mt in 2023. The GMT's overwinter analysis indicates that this increase in shortspine thornyhead mortality is likely driven by changes to fishery behavior to fish closer to the seafloor in those years, compared to prior years. In 2022, industry communication indicated that this change was the result of an effort to avoid young sablefish bycatch in the middle of the water column, as well as an effort to follow Pacific whiting aggregations to shallower waters in both years. Given this and the uncertainty as to whether Pacific whiting aggregations will continue to drive the fleets into shallower waters, the GMT does not support lowering the set-aside to 50 mt at this time. Additionally, if the Council chooses to remove the shortspine thornyhead management line at 34° 27' N. lat. ([Agenda Item F.5.a, Supplemental GMT Report 2, April 2024](#)), the coastwide ACL could be highly attained. In that scenario, an at-sea set-aside that is set too low could put the ACL at risk of being exceeded in the event of unforeseen at-sea bycatch. However, shortspine thornyhead is typically caught in small amounts over many hauls throughout the season, making it possible for the sectors to monitor catches inseason and adjust fishing behavior as needed to stay within the set-aside.

The GMT also does not support increasing the set-aside either, because shortspine thornyhead allocations are decreasing by around 70 percent in the IFQ fishery in 2025-26, likely posing a constraint to bottom trawl vessels and their access to Dover sole. As described previously, one likely driver of high shortspine thornyhead bycatch in 2022 was the at-sea sectors' attempt to avoid young sablefish in the middle of the water column by fishing closer to the seafloor. In other words, the sectors were actively taking measures to stay within the sablefish set-aside at a time when the sablefish population was booming. Even with the potential for another strong 2023 year class, the sablefish ACLs are increasing roughly threefold in 2025-26, and a sablefish set-aside increase to 429 mt should give the at-sea sectors enough flexibility so that they do not need to actively avoid sablefish bycatch.

Therefore, the GMT recommends the Council adopt the status quo (Option 1) set-aside of 70 mt for shortspine thornyhead north of 34° 27' N. lat as PPA.

Widow Rockfish

Widow rockfish IFQ allocations are decreasing by 12 percent in 2025 under status quo management measures, and widow rockfish has become an important target species in the IFQ's growing midwater rockfish fishery. Because of this, the GMT explored an option that would lower the at-sea set-aside from 476 mt to 300 mt. As described in Section 2.2.7 of the Council Analytical Document, "an additional 176 mt equates to an additional fleetwide ex-vessel revenue of \$104,763, assuming all additional 176 mt are utilized by the midwater rockfish and bottom trawl sectors." This is compared to expected losses under status quo IFQ allocations of \$879,172 in 2025 and \$1,333,937, compared to 2023 catches. Some amount of widow rockfish is caught as bycatch by shoreside whiting vessels but is considered incidental catch in this fishery with very low prices per pound.

The status quo set-aside of 476 mt is based on the sectors' historical maximum mortality in 2017, but at-sea mortality has been less than 210 mt in all other years since 2011. The probability of exceeding the Option 2 (300 mt) set-aside is 8 percent, or less than 1 in 10 years on average, if the

sectors continue fishing at recent average Pacific whiting attainment levels, or roughly 1 in 5 years if both sectors were to catch the full 2023 Pacific whiting allocation amounts. The GMT considers this risk to be relatively low and risk averse. The risk to the widow rockfish set-aside is slightly higher if the sectors fish predominantly northern fishing grounds but is still well below a risk neutral 50 percent probability of being exceeded if the sectors fished exclusively off Washington. Additionally, the declining widow rockfish OFLs are expected to persist across future management cycles. The declining OFLs are a reflection of a declining population as the stock is fished down toward the management target (e.g., 40 percent of unfished spawning output), which could lower the likelihood of at-sea encounters with widow rockfish over time.

Given the socioeconomic benefits to the IFQ fishery and the low risk of exceeding the set-aside, **the GMT recommends the Council adopt the Option 2 at-sea set-aside of 300 mt for widow rockfish as PPA.**

Yellowtail Rockfish North of 40° 10' N. lat.

Yellowtail rockfish is also an important target species in the IFQ midwater rockfish fishery, and ACLs are increasing by 12 percent in 2025, compared to 2023. Yellowtail rockfish bycatch in the at-sea fishery is highly variable year-to-year and therefore difficult to predict. Years with high bycatch amounts are mainly driven by large unforeseen bycatch events off of Washington, as opposed to small amounts throughout the season. The Option 2 set-aside of 360 mt is based on a 12 percent increase to the set-aside, proportional to the anticipated ACL increases in 2025-26. During our overwinter analysis, the GMT's bootstrap simulation analysis projected very high yellowtail rockfish catches and a high risk of exceeding the status quo set-aside. However, those projections seem to be inflated by the few years with very large bycatch events, so the risk is likely overestimated. To offer the Council a more precautionary option, we added Option 3 that would increase the set-aside to 450 mt in light of the unpredictability and the high catch projections. However, given the importance of yellowtail rockfish to the IFQ fishery and the fact that at-sea mortality has been lower than the status quo option in all years since 2011, the GMT now considers Option 3 overly precautionary. **The GMT recommends the Council adopt the Option 2 at-sea set-aside of 360 mt for yellowtail rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat. as PPA to accommodate the risk of large bycatch events off of Washington;** under this Option, the IFQ fishery would still receive 468 mt more yellowtail rockfish in 2025 compared to 2023, as well as 276 mt more in 2026 (Table 20 of Section 2.2.8, [Agenda Item F.5, REVISED Attachment 2, April 2024](#)).

Action Item #10: Within Non-Trawl HGs/Shares

Rebuilding Species

Under this action item, the Council will adopt the preliminary two-year within non-trawl HGs and shares for yelloweye rockfish.

Yelloweye Rockfish

Yelloweye rockfish is a rebuilding species managed with a sharing arrangement across non-trawl sectors, which determines the sector-specific HGs for those non-trawl sectors. Yelloweye rockfish is rebuilding ahead of schedule. Table 1 in this report shows the yelloweye rockfish HGs for 2025-

26. The GMT recommends maintaining the current status quo for yelloweye rockfish HGs as PPA.

Non-Overfished Species

Within the non-trawl allocation, several stocks are currently managed with an informal sharing arrangement between the commercial non-trawl sector and the three state-specific recreational sectors. Council action is not necessary if any non-trawl sector exceeds their respective harvest guideline, but the states generally coordinate to discuss management responses as needed. The exception to this is sablefish south of 36° N. lat., for which a formal allocation is established between the limited entry and open access sectors within the non-trawl sectors, and the Council manages those sectors to stay within the sector-specific shares. For the nearshore rockfish complex, state-specific sharing arrangements are established for each species within the complex.

Canary Rockfish

The GMT did not reach a consensus on a recommendation for PPA among the canary allocation options analyzed under this AIC #5 (trawl or non-trawl allocation) or AIC #10 (within non-trawl HGs/shares); however, as an outcome of our analysis, we recommend reducing the at-sea set-aside from 36 mt to 20 mt (AIC #9). Based on our analysis, the GMT was not able to identify a suitable reallocation. The canary rockfish ACLs are dropping by roughly 55 percent in 2025-26, and the team thinks these reductions should impact the various groundfish fisheries equitably.

Nearshore Rockfish Complex North of 40° 10' N. lat.

Currently, the nearshore rockfish complex is managed using an informal sharing arrangement. **The GMT recommends the Council select continuing to use the status quo sharing arrangement for stocks managed in the nearshore rockfish complex north of 40° 10' N. lat. as PPA**, noting that California quillback rockfish is expected to be removed from the complex.

Sablefish South of 36° N. lat.

Sablefish south of 36° N. lat. is currently managed using a 70-30 percent sharing of the non-trawl allocation between the limited entry fixed gear (LEFG) and open access (OA) sectors, respectively. Prior to 2017-2018, there was a 55-45 split. The GMT uses these shares to monitor the fishery inseason. **The GMT recommends the Council select continuing with the status quo 70-30 percent formal sharing arrangement between LEFG and OA for sablefish south of 36° N. lat. in 2025-26 as PPA.**

In addition to adopting the LEFG and OA sharing arrangement, the Council is also tasked with considering creating a new recreational set-aside for sablefish south of 36° N. lat. that would be deducted from the non-trawl allocation before then allocating to the commercial fixed gear sectors (i.e., LEFG and OA). Recreational mortality of sablefish south of 36° N. lat. has been increasing in recent years, and industry has indicated some potential for further growth. The options for Council consideration are:

- Option 1 (Status Quo): No recreational set-aside for sablefish south of 36° N. lat.
- Option 2: Create a 10 mt recreational set-aside within the non-trawl allocation for sablefish south of 36° N. lat.

The GMT recommends the Council adopt Option 2 of setting a 10 mt recreational set-aside for sablefish south of 36° N. lat. as PPA to improve catch accounting of a sector where mortality

appears to be increasing. Option 2 is not expected to impact the LEFG or OA sectors given the historical underutilization of those allocations.

Bocaccio South of 40° 10' N. lat.

At this time, the GMT recommends the Council adopt the status quo harvest guideline sharing arrangement for bocaccio south of 40° 10' N. lat. as PPA, because neither the commercial nor recreational non-trawl sectors are fully attaining their allocation.

Cowcod South of 40° 10' N. lat.

At this time, the GMT recommends the Council adopt the status quo harvest guidelines for cowcod south of 40° 10' N. lat. as PPA, because neither the commercial nor recreational non-trawl sectors are fully attaining their allocation.