

GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS - FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discussed the current status of groundfish fisheries and the need for any inseason adjustments. Below, the GMT details the action items that have been brought to the GMT for Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) consideration. Included below in Appendix 1 are the 2024 scorecards.

Summary

- Sablefish north of 36° N. lat.:
 - **Limited Entry Fixed Gear (LEFG): The GMT recommends Option 1, which projects fleetwide landings at 75-97 percent of the landings target.**
 - **Open Access (OA): The GMT recommends Option 1, which projects fleetwide landings at 88-101 percent of the landings target.**
- Widow rockfish and yellowtail rockfish LEFG and OA trip limits north of 40° 10' N. lat.:
 - Although the GMT does not have a management concern associated with increasing these trip limits, we do not have a recommendation and defer to the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) and industry as to the need for these trip limit increases.

Action Items

Sablefish North of 36° N. lat.

The GMT investigated whether sablefish trip limits could be increased, per a request from the GAP, and provides the following options for Council consideration. Discussion with GAP members indicated that sablefish markets continue to be less lucrative than they were prior to 2020 and, consequently, that prices per pound may be a stronger predictor of participation than before as some vessels opt to target other species instead. Therefore, for both of the northern sablefish sectors, the GMT provides data on 2024 sablefish prices to date alongside calculated prices used to predict participation for the remainder of the year. This information can help interpret the fleetwide landings projections under each of the low, average, and high price scenarios. Predicted prices for the remainder of the year are calculated using prices in each respective period of recent year(s). Low predicted prices are calculated as 10 percent lower than the average true price for that period, and high predicted prices are calculated as 10 percent higher. Predicted prices for the remainder of 2024 are based on 2023 prices in this model run, which are still relatively low compared to all other years in the time series, which means that even predicted prices in the “high” price scenario are still low relative to historical prices.

Limited Entry Fixed Gear North of 36° N. lat.

2024 average bimonthly sablefish prices per pound in the Limited Entry sector north of 36° N. lat. (LEN) have ranged from \$2.32 to \$2.49, which falls within the average to high price scenario estimated for the bimonthly periods from July through December (Table 1). Note that there is some overlap across the three prices scenarios because certain bimonthly periods (e.g., period 4, July-August) fetch a higher price per pound than other periods (e.g., period 6, November-December),

which means that the “average” period 4 price is higher than the “high” period 6 price. Because landings are estimated per bimonthly period, this overlap does not conflict with the ability to compare projections across price scenarios.

Trip limit options and projected 2024 landings for the LEN sector are shown in Table 2 below. Under Status Quo trip limits, LEN landings for the full year are projected to be 55-70 percent of the 2024 landings target. So far this year, five LEN vessels have attained more than 90 percent of the Status Quo bimonthly limit, indicating that at least some vessels in the fleet would benefit from a trip limit increase. Given that the model is currently overpredicting LEN landings, likely due to abnormally low participation, the GMT modeled Option 3, which is projected to exceed the 2024 landings target under the average and high price scenarios. However, given this low participation and the uncertainty as to whether it might re-stabilize to typical levels, **the GMT recommends Option 1, which projects fleetwide landings at 75-97 percent of the landings target.**

Table 1. Range of actual average LEN sablefish prices per pound by period from periods 1-3 (January through June) along with the range of calculated predicted prices by period for the remainder of the year under each of the three prices scenarios, based on true prices from 2023 and 2024.

Actual Avg. Prices By Period (Periods 1-3)	Price Scenario	Predicted Prices By Period (Periods 4-6)
\$2.32 - \$2.49	low	\$1.60 - \$2.31
	average	\$1.77 - \$2.57
	high	\$1.95 - \$2.80

Table 2. Options for sablefish trip limit increases in the LEN sector. Bolded row represents the GMT recommendation.

Option	Trip Limit	Projected Landings (rd. wt. mt) under Three Price Scenarios			Target (mt)	Attainment under Three Price Scenarios		
		Low	Average	High		Low	Average	High
SQ	4,500 lbs./week not to exceed 9,000 lbs./2 months	209	237	265	380	55%	62%	70%
1	7,000 lbs./week not to exceed 14,000 lbs./2 months	284	326	367		75%	86%	97%
2	9,000 lbs./week not to exceed 18,000 lbs./2 months	344	397	450		91%	104%	118%

Open Access North of 36° N. lat.

2024 average bimonthly sablefish prices per pound in the Open Access sector north of 36° N. lat. (OAN) have ranged from \$2.71 to \$2.75, which falls within the high price scenario estimated for the bimonthly periods from July through December (Table 3). In other words, prices in 2024 have been slightly higher than they were at the end of 2023 but still low relative to all other years prior. Trip limit options and projected 2024 landings for the OAN sector are shown in **Table 4** below.

Under Status Quo trip limits, OAN landings for the full year are projected to be 79-90 percent of the 2024 landings target. So far this year, three OAN vessels have attained more than 90 percent of the Status Quo bimonthly limit, indicating that at least some vessels in the fleet would benefit from a trip limit increase. The model is overpredicting fleetwide 2024 landings by more than 150 percent when 2024 data is excluded, which is likely due to slightly lower participation along with depressed marketability of sablefish. Landings in March and April of this year were half of what they were in March and April of 2023. Given this high overprediction and the indication that some vessels are making up for low sablefish prices by landing high volumes and could benefit from trip limit increases, **the GMT recommends Option 1, which projects fleetwide landings at 88-101 percent of the landings target.**

Table 3. Range of actual average OAN sablefish prices per pound by period from periods 1-3 (January through June) along with the range of calculated predicted prices by period for the remainder of the year under each of the three prices scenarios, based on true prices from 2023 and 2024.

Actual Avg. Prices By Period (Periods 1-3)	Price Scenario	Predicted Prices By Period (Periods 4-6)
\$2.71 - \$2.75	low	\$2.01 - \$2.39
	average	\$2.23 - \$2.66
	high	\$2.45 - \$2.92

Table 4. Options for sablefish trip limit increases in the OAN sector. Bolded row represents the GMT recommendation.

Option	Trip Limit	Projected Landings (rd. wt. mt) under Three Price Scenarios			Target (mt)	Attainment under Three Price Scenarios		
		Low	Average	High		Low	Average	High
SQ	3,000 lbs./week not to exceed 6,000 lbs./2 months	492	527	563	626	79%	85%	90%
1	3,500 lbs./week not to exceed 7,000 lbs./2 months	551	592	632		88%	95%	101%
2	4,000 lbs./week not to exceed 8,000 lbs./2 months	610	655	700		97%	105%	112%

Limited Entry Fixed Gear and Open Access North of 40° 10' N. lat.

The GMT received a request to double the yellowtail rockfish and widow rockfish OA and LEFG trip limits for the remainder of the year. The requester stated that the weather conditions have prevented fishing, and therefore, they would like an increase in trip limits once the weather conditions improve so that they can make up for fishing that was lost. Given the actions taken in September and November of 2023 to mitigate California quillback rockfish encounters, currently between 42° and 40° 10' N. lat., the non-trawl fleet in federal waters is only permitted to use non-bottom contact gear within the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) to access midwater

shelf species. In addition, California state action to prohibit targeting of shelf rockfish in state waters between 36° and 42° N. lat. has likely led to many of these vessels fishing offshore. The GMT sees merit in the request, as area closures and gear restrictions have required the fleet to fish offshore where weather conditions can have a larger impact on smaller vessels typically prosecuting these trip limits. Higher trip limits may allow those vessels to land larger volumes across fewer trips, thereby promoting safety at-sea (National Standard 10) and potentially reducing fuel and operational costs associated with traveling farther offshore.

It is difficult to project effort as weather improves, because the models rely on data from previous years where the management measures to protect California quillback rockfish were not implemented. Therefore, Summer of 2023 and Spring of 2024 may not be indicative of actual effort and harvest between the June and September meetings of this year. Additionally, the only current nearshore opportunity off northern California is to target midwater rockfish (including yellowtail and widow rockfishes) stocks with approved non-bottom contact hook-and-line gear configurations. Therefore, the GMT sees merit in learning more about what level of trip limits might be attained in this fishery as effort increases.

LEFG and OA vessels currently land less than 0.1 percent of the non-trawl allocations of yellowtail and widow rockfishes. The trip limit increases may help facilitate the attainment of the National Standard 1 objective to attain but not exceed optimum yield while posing very limited risk to co-occurring stocks. Canary rockfish are a co-occurring species of concern but are being attained well under their non-trawl commercial allocation, and the increase of yellowtail and widow rockfish trip limits is unlikely to jeopardize their allocation nor create regulatory discards. If we receive information that vessels are exceeding trip limits of co-occurring species as a result of these trip limit increases, the GMT can revisit trip limits for co-occurring species in September.

The GMT modeled a mid-point Option 1 for both species, as well as the original request to double the trip limit in Table 5 and Table 7. Historically, when trip limits increase dramatically the team is concerned with the possibility of an increase in targeting of the species. While this still could happen, given the restrictions in California where the majority of the fleet exists, the team feels that there will likely not be more people coming into the fishery. In Oregon to date, eight vessels have harvested 0.33 mt. of widow rockfish, and nine vessels have harvested 0.85 mt of yellowtail rockfish. Therefore, there could be an increase in effort and increased harvest and it would still not pose a conservation risk. Although the GMT does not have a management concern associated with increasing these trip limits (widow and yellowtail rockfishes), we do not have a recommendation and defer to the GAP and industry as to the need for these trip limit increases.

Widow rockfish LEFG/OA North of 40° 10' N. lat.

In 2024, fewer than 3 vessels operating in the LEFG sector landed widow rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat. None of these vessels have come within 50 percent of the trip limit; therefore, the projection in Table 6 will not change.

There are 12 vessels operating in the OA sector that have landed widow rockfish; fewer than three of these vessels have come within 50 percent of the trip limit. However, there is no conservation risk to the stock if trip limits increase, given that we do not expect many fishery participants to

take advantage of the higher trip limits. Under both options, the sectors would remain well under one percent of the non-trawl allocation of 400 mt.

Table 5. Status quo and alternative trip limit options for LE/OA widow rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat.

Option	Sector	Area	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec
Status Quo	LE	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	4,000 lbs. / 2 months					
	OA	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	2,000 lbs. / 2 months					
Option 1	LE	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	4,000 lbs. / 2 months		6,000 lbs. / 2 months			
	OA	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	2,000 lbs. / 2 months		3,000 lbs. / 2 months			
Option 2	LE	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	4,000 lbs. / 2 months		8,000 lbs. / 2 months			
	OA	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	2,000 lbs. / 2 months		4,000 lbs. / 2 months			

Table 6. Projected coastwide widow rockfish landings.

Option	Sector	Projected Landings (mt) N. of 40° 10' N. lat.	Projected Landings (mt) S. of 40° 10' N. lat.	Coastwide Non-trawl Allocation (mt)	% Attainment
Status Quo	LE	1.0	0.1	400	<0.1
	OA	5.2	1.5		
Option 1	LE	1.0	0.1	400	<0.1
	OA	7.1	1.5		
Option 2	LE	1.0	0.1	400	<0.1
	OA	8.6	1.5		

Yellowtail rockfish LEFG/OA North of 40° 10' N. lat.

In 2024, only three vessels operating in the LE sector have landed yellowtail rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat. None of these vessels have come within 50 percent of the trip limit; therefore, the projection of 2.3 mt in the LEFG will not change (Table 8).

There are 44 vessels operating in the OA sector that have landed yellowtail rockfish, but similarly, none of the vessels have come within 50 percent of the trip limit; therefore, we would not expect them to attain the limit as they are still projected at 2.0 mt regardless of the increase in trip limit. In 2023, fewer than three vessels reached or exceeded their trip limits. However, there is no

conservation risk to the stock if trip limits increase, given that we do not expect many fishery participants to take advantage of the higher trip limits. The sector would remain under one percent of the non-trawl allocation.

Table 7. Status quo and alternative trip limit options for LE/OA yellowtail rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat.

Option	Sector	Area	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec
Status Quo	LE	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	3,000 lbs. / month					
	OA	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	1,500 lbs. / month					
Option 1	LE	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	3,000 lbs. / month		4,500 lbs. / month			
	OA	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	1,500 lbs. / month		2,500 lbs. / month			
Option 2	LE	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	3,000 lbs. / month		6,000 lbs. / month			
	OA	N. of 40° 10' N. lat	1,500 lbs. / month		3,000 lbs. / month			

Table 8. Projected yellowtail rockfish north of 40° 10' N. lat. landings.

Option	Sector	Projected Landings (mt)	Non-trawl Allocation (mt)	% Attainment
Status Quo	LE	2.3	544	<0.1
	OA	2.0		
Option 1	LE	2.3	544	<0.1
	OA	2.0		
Option 2	LE	2.3	544	<0.1
	OA	2.0		

Lingcod Entry and Open Access between of 42° N. lat. and 37° 07' N. lat.

The GMT discussed the potential impacts of allowing lingcod retention on non-bottom contact hook-and-line configurations approved for use within the Non-Trawl RCA¹ between 42° N. lat. and 37° 07' N. lat. The request is in response to reported regulatory discarded lingcod caught on these gear types, in addition to equity concerns; commercial non-trawl fishermen are not allowed to retain lingcod within the Non-Trawl RCA (3 nautical miles to 75 fathoms [fm]), while recreational anglers are allowed to retain lingcod shoreward of 20 fm and seaward of 50 fm. To evaluate this request, the GMT reviewed 2024 logbook data to see if there were any documented

¹ See [50 CFR 660.230\(b\)\(6\)](#) and [50 CFR 660.330\(b\)\(3\)](#)

lingcod discards with the gear, and zero were found. However, midwater gear codes have been required in California since September of 2023. In between the inception of these gear codes and the closure of lingcod in the Non-Trawl RCA between 42° N. lat. and 37° 07' N. lat., fishermen landed 0.4 mt of lingcod on non-bottom contact gears, using both the midwater troll gear and vertical jig gear coastwide.

Additionally, when analyzing the non-bottom contact exempted fishing permit (EFP) gear there have been nominal landings of lingcod on observed trips. The vertical jig gear configuration had a set-aside for lingcod north and south of 40° 10' N. lat. from 2015 through 2020, and beginning in 2021, a set-aside exclusively south of 40° 10' N. lat. was established. The set-aside ranged from between 0.5 mt to 1.5 mt. In some years, there were no lingcod interactions with this EFP. However, observer data indicates it ranged from less than 0.1 mt to 0.2 mt across all years and areas.

Evidence to date indicates that non-bottom contact gear configurations have limited interactions with quillback rockfish. However, that evidence is limited, as these gear configurations were only recently approved for use inside the Non-Trawl RCA in 2023. To verify this assertion with more data, the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) plan to propose a Directed Open Access Permit Program as a new management measure in the 2025-26 groundfish harvest specifications and management action. This would allow NMFS to shift more observer coverage to vessels participating in the directed OA fishery, thus facilitating additional data collection on non-bottom contact gear types. The GMT would like to wait until the next biennium (2027-28) when additional observer data on non-bottom contact gear type performance is available to analyze whether lingcod trip limits can be increased in northern California with minimal risk to quillback rockfish. In the meantime, the GMT is concerned that these gear types could be improperly fished to target lingcod in the Non-Trawl RCA, thus increasing the risk of encountering quillback rockfish. Given the limited flexibility in allowable quillback rockfish catch (for discards) and the fact that the rebuilding plan has not yet been implemented, the GMT expects that the risks outweigh the benefits if allowing any lingcod retention within the Non-Trawl RCA between 42° N. lat. and 37° 07' N. lat. at this time. If quillback rockfish discards were to increase alongside the retention of lingcod, then there is a possibility that the gear-specific trip limits in the Non-Trawl RCA could be retracted, and the GMT feels that it is not worth the risk to jeopardize the only gear type allowable for use in the Non-Trawl RCA.

Informational Items

Chinook Salmon

There was a technical issue with the reporting service that transmits West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) salmon at-sea discard data to PacFIN, resulting in Chinook salmon discards not being updated in the APEX reports for a good portion of 2023. The technical issue has been fixed, and the 2023 APEX report now reads 884 Chinook salmon caught in the bottom trawl fishery, compared to 288 fish in our March in-season wrap-up report ([Agenda Item F.8.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, March 2024](#)). Other sectors in the scorecard are not impacted. Accounting for the updated data, 2023 bottom trawl catch accounted for 16 percent of the 5,500 Chinook non-whiting threshold by year-end. Across all non-whiting sectors, catches were 29 percent of the threshold.

Appendix 1.

2024 Chinook Salmon Scorecard

Table 9. Chinook salmon catch (numbers of fish) in 2024 as of June 10, 2024 in relation to the sector thresholds (Source: PacFIN [IFQ021 Combined Sector Salmon Bycatch ESA Report](#)).

Sector a/	Sub-Sector	Catch To Date (# of fish)	% of Threshold	Total Threshold (# of fish)
Whiting	CP	102	1%	11,000
	MS	*	--	
	Shoreside	41	0%	
	Tribal	264 b/	2%	
	Total	403	4%	
Non-Whiting	Bottom Trawl	758	14%	5,500
	Midwater Trawl	92	2%	
	Tribal	0	0%	
	Fixed Gear	500 c/	9%	
	WA Rec			
	OR Rec + longleader			
	CA Rec			
Total	1,350	25%		
All groundfish fisheries & EFPs		1,753		

* Confidential data

a/ There is a reserve of 3,500 fish, in addition to the number of fish in the whiting and non-whiting thresholds

b/ Current year tribal landings are estimated as the maximum of the historic landings for the last 5 years

c/ GMT proposed assumption of annual mortality, which assumed maximum historical mortality (154) plus a 250 fish buffer from the 2017 BiOp and an additional 96 fish to account for some uncertainty in recreational salmon seasons; recreational estimates only apply to groundfish fisheries occurring outside of salmon seasons

2024 Pacific Spiny Dogfish Scorecard

Table 10. 2024 estimated Pacific spiny dogfish mortality in metric tons (mt) by sector, as of June 8, 2024. (Source: PacFIN)

Sector	Estimated Mortality (mt)
At-Sea Hake Catcher Processor	2.4
At-Sea Hake Mothership	*
IFQ (non-whiting)	116.2
Shoreside Hake a/	3.3
Non-Trawl	45.9
Incidental/Miscellaneous	1.9
Recreational	0.1
Treaty	275 b/
Total c/	444.8
ACL	1,456
Percent ACL c/	30.5%

* Confidential

a/ For the shoreside whiting sector, landings account for roughly 90 percent of total catches, and for the bottom trawl, midwater rockfish, and non-trawl sectors, discards make up the majority of total catch

b/ 2024 set-aside for tribal fisheries, mortality is projected as full attainment

c/ Does not include any confidential data

2024 Shortbelly Rockfish Scorecard

Table 11. 2024 estimated shortbelly rockfish mortality in metric tons (mt) by sector, as of June 8, 2024. (Source: PacFIN)

Sector	Mortality (mt)
At-Sea Hake Catcher Processor	-
At-Sea Hake Mothership	-
IFQ (non-whiting)	54.3
Incidental/Miscellaneous	<0.1
Shoreside Hake	4.5
Treaty	-
Total	58.8
Threshold	2,000
Percent (%) of Threshold	2.9%

2024 Yelloweye Rockfish Scorecard

Table 12. Allocations and year-end projected mortality impacts (mt) of yelloweye rockfish as of June 8, 2024.

Sector	Sub-sector	Projection (mt)	Reference Point	Tracking limit (mt)	Projected Percent Attainment
Grand Total a/		31.8	ACL c/	53.0	60.1%
Off the top b/		8.2	Set Asides	10.7	76.5%
Trawl	CP	--	Trawl allocation	3.4	11.8%
	MS	--			
	IFQ	0.4			
	Sub Total	0.4	Trawl allocation	3.4	11.8%
Non-trawl	Non-nearshore + Nearshore	3.8	HG	8.2	46.9%
	WA Rec	4.3		10.0	42.8%
	OR Rec	5.8		9.1	63.5%
	CA Rec	9.3		11.8	78.6%
	Sub Total	23.2	HG d/	39.2	59.3%
	Non-nearshore + Nearshore	3.8	ACT	6.4	59.8%
	WA Rec	4.3		7.9	54.7%
	OR Rec	5.8		7.2	81.0%
	CA Rec	9.3		9.3	100%
	Sub Total	23.2	ACT	30.7	75.6%

a/ The Grand Total is the sum of the Trawl Sector Total and Non-trawl Sector ACT Total

b/ off the top set asides: Tribal = 5.0 mt; EFPs = 0.0 mt; Research = 0.53 mt; Incidental Open Access = 2.66 mt

c/ ACL = Set asides + Trawl allocation + Non-trawl allocation

d/ The non-trawl allocation is the sum of the non-trawl HGs, 39.2 mt

PFMC

06/11/24