

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2027-28: AREA MANAGEMENT AND OFF-THE-TOP DEDUCTIONS

In this report, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) makes recommendations to the Council on Preliminary Preferred Alternatives (PPAs) for management measures regarding area management and off-the-top deductions. This report covers Items #2-4 from the Action Item Checklist (AIC; [Agenda Item C.7, Attachment 1, April 2026](#)). Items #5-11 (Supplemental GMT Report 2) and Items #12-20 (Supplemental GMT Report 3) will be in separate reports. Item #1 (harvest specifications) will be addressed under Agenda Item C.4.

Summary of Recommendations

- *AIC#2 Area Management:*
 - **The GMT recommends Option 2 as the PPA to remove the following YRCAs from regulations: Stonewall Bank Expansions 1 and 2, Point St. George, South Reef, Reading Rock, Point Delgada (North), and Point Delgada (South) YRCAs.**
 - **The GMT recommends Option 2 as the PPA to remove the 150 fm Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundary line around Lasuen Knoll and revise the Federal language regarding the exemption of this Non-Trawl RCA line.**
 - **The GMT recommends Option 2 as the PPA for regulatory text modification in the Federal non-trawl trip limit tables ([Table 2a \(North\) to Part 660, Subpart E, Title 50](#); [Table 2a \(South\) to Part 660, Subpart E, Title 50](#); [Table 3a \(North\) to Part 660, Subpart F, Title 50](#); [Table 3a \(South\) to Part 660, Subpart F, Title 50](#)) but substituting “enforce” with “implement” for clarity.**
- *AIC#3 Off-the-top Deductions – Research, Incidental Open Access, and Exempted Fishing Permits:*
 - Research Set-asides
 - **The GMT recommends the Council adopt the research set-asides for 2027-28 in Appendix 1. With the exception of yelloweye rockfish and petrale sole, these are the rolling 5-year median mortality in the research sector. For yelloweye rockfish, the GMT recommends continuing to use the custom value of 2.92 mt. For petrale sole, the GMT recommends adopting the 2025-26 value of 24.1 mt.**
 - Incidental Open Access
 - **The GMT recommends adopting the Incidental Open Access (IOA) set-asides for 2027-28 in Appendix 1. These are the rolling 5-year average mortality in the IOA sector.**
 - Exempted Fishing Permits: There are no EFP set-asides requested for 2027-28.
- *AIC #4 Off-the-top Deductions – Tribal:*
 - **The GMT recommends the Council adopt the Tribal requested set asides, as shown in [Agenda Item C.7.a, Supplemental Tribal Report 1, April 2026](#) and Appendix 1 of this report.**

Action Item #2: Area Management

Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Areas

Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Areas (YRCAs) are spatial closures defined in Federal regulations at [50 CFR 660.70](#) and are intended to reduce fishing impacts on yelloweye rockfish. These areas may be activated and deactivated as needed to support conservation objectives. Several YRCAs have never been implemented but remain in Federal regulations as available tools.

The [2025 yelloweye rockfish stock assessment](#) adopted by the Council indicates that the stock's spawning output now exceeds the management target of 40 percent of the unfished level, signaling recovery. The GMT sees an opportunity for regulatory streamlining by removing from regulation any YRCAs ([§660.70](#)) that have never been activated. Because these areas have not been closed historically, their removal from regulation is anticipated to have no biological impact on the stock. **Therefore, the GMT recommends removing from regulations the following YRCAs that have never been activated: Stonewall Bank expansions 1 and 2, Point St. George, South Reef, Reading Rock, Point Delgada (North), and Point Delgada (South) YRCAs ([§660.70](#) (g), (h), (j), (k), (l), and (n)-(r)).** Further rationale is provided in Section 2.2 of the Council Analytical Document in Agenda Item C.7, Attachment 2.

Lasuen Knoll

The GMT recommends Option 2 as the PPA to remove the 150 fm Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundary line around Lasuen Knoll and revise the Federal language regarding the exemption of this Non-Trawl RCA line.

RCA Regulatory Language

The GMT recommends Option 2 as the PPA for regulatory text modification in the Federal non-trawl trip limit tables ([Table 2a \(North\) to Part 660, Subpart E, Title 50](#); [Table 2a \(South\) to Part 660, Subpart E, Title 50](#); [Table 3a \(North\) to Part 660, Subpart F, Title 50](#); [Table 3a \(South\) to Part 660, Subpart F, Title 50](#)) but substituting “enforce” with “implement” for clarity, as provided below.

Revise the language in the Federal non-trawl trip limit tables to “~~The Non-Trawl RCA is an area closed to fishing with particular non-trawl gear types, as defined at § 660.11. Non-Trawl RCA boundaries apply in the EEZ only; see appropriate state regulations for state closures, however state regulations may implement RCA boundaries in state waters; see appropriate state regulations.~~ Non-Trawl RCA boundaries may be revised via inseason action; therefore, users should refer back to this table throughout the year.”

The GMT supports the rationale for these modifications as described in [Agenda Item C.7.a Supplemental CDFW Report 1](#). The GMT finds that these changes, paired with changes to state regulations, to be beneficial to the fishery. It would allow for continuous management of fathom-based RCA lines across jurisdictions. Fishery participants would then be able to download the fathom lines from a single site and enforcement could continue to enforce the RCA single unit as opposed to two separate closures. These changes would provide positive impacts to industry as it simplifies regulatory language.

Action Item #3: Off-the-top Deductions – Research, Incidental Open Access, and Exempted Fishing Permits

The Council adopted preliminary off-the-top deductions in November 2025, which includes set-aside amounts that are intended to account for research activity, incidental catch of groundfish species in non-groundfish fisheries (i.e., IOA), and expected mortality associated with any EFPs for the upcoming biennium.

As no EFPs were presented to the Council that require set-asides, **the GMT recommends that all EFP set-asides remain at 0 mt for 2027-28.**

In November, the Council's PPA action would set the research set-aside as the rolling five-year median of research mortality and would set the IOA set-aside as the rolling five-year average of IOA mortality. The intent is to redistribute additional tonnage to the directed groundfish fisheries, recognizing that they are set asides intended to account for expected research and IOA mortality rather than harvest limits. The exception to this is yelloweye rockfish, for which the Council-adopted 2.92 mt research set-aside is designed to accommodate specific research projects that catch yelloweye rockfish. **The GMT recommends continuing to use the custom value of 2.92 mt.**

At this meeting, the GMT is recommending a change to the petrale sole research set aside given new information about the estimated year-end research mortality in 2025, which is discussed in our Inseason report at this meeting ([Agenda Item C.6.a, GMT Report 1, April 2026](#)). Research mortality in 2025 is estimated to be 28.5 mt but is still uncertain, pending the final Groundfish Expanded Multiyear Mortality report that includes 2025. Petrale sole is a highly attained stock, and the ACL was estimated to be exceeded by 15 mt in 2025. Maintaining the set aside of 24.1 mt, as opposed to the November PPA of 15.7 mt, decreases the risk of exceeding the ACL again, or even the OFL. **The GMT recommends the Council adopt the 2025-26 research set aside of 24.1 mt for petrale sole in 2027-28, which is based on the long-term maximum of research mortality prior to 2025.**

For the remainder of the stocks/stock complexes, the GMT continues to support the Council's PPA for research, IOA, and EFP set asides for 2027-28. Note that there are no requests for EFP set-asides in 2027-28. **The GMT recommends the Council adopt as interim FPA the research, IOA, and EFP set-asides in Table A-1 of Appendix 1.**

Action Item #4: Tribal Set-asides

In November, the Council adopted the interim Tribal set-asides as requested in in [Agenda Item F.8.a, Supplemental Tribal Report 1, November 2025](#). After further review of projected trends in fisheries participation and expected mortality, the Tribes have since made updates to their requested set-asides in [Agenda Item C.7.a, Supplemental Tribal Report 1, April 2026](#). Compared to the November 2025 set-aside values, the April 2026 set-aside values are the same for all species except for canary rockfish, petrale sole, shortspine thornyhead, widow rockfish, and yelloweye rockfish.

For canary rockfish, petrale sole, shortspine thornyhead, and widow rockfish, the Tribes are

reducing their set-aside requests for these species in recognition of recent and projected mortality trends in Tribal fisheries. Respectively, these set-asides requests will reduce to 290 mt, 35 mt, 100 mt, and 40 mt.

For yelloweye rockfish, the Tribes have been carefully following Council discussion surrounding a precautionary approach to allowing access to this recently rebuilt species. The Tribes support this discussion and have reduced their set-aside request to 12 mt for 2027 and 2028. It should be noted that this set-aside would be unlikely to accommodate all potential mortality in Tribal fisheries if the Tribes to fully relax existing management constraints originally intended to control mortality of overfished species. Nonetheless, the Tribes feel that this set-aside could accommodate expected Tribal mortality resulting from a moderate relaxation of existing management measures. This moderate relaxation would also be in line with a precautionary response to the rebuilt status of yelloweye rockfish.

The GMT recommends the Council adopt the Tribal requested set-asides, as shown in Agenda Item C.7.a, Supplemental Tribal Report 1, April 2026 and Table A-1 of Appendix 1 of this report.

04/10/26

Appendix 1

Table A-1. GMT recommended interim FPA off-the-top deductions for Tribal, research, EFPs, and IOA sectors for 2027-28.

Species	Area	Tribal	EFP	Research	IOA	Set-aside Total
YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH	Coastwide	12	0	2.92	1.4	16.3
Arrowtooth flounder	Coastwide	2,041	0	8.0	18.9	2,067.9
Big skate	Coastwide	15	0	2.6	31.6	49.2
Black rockfish	Washington	18	0	0.6	0.0	18.6
Black rockfish	California	0	0	0.0	0.3	0.3
Bocaccio	S of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	2.7	0.6	3.3
Cabezon	S of 42° N. lat.	0	0	0.0	0.6	0.6
California scorpionfish	Coastwide	0	0	0.1	0.6	0.7
Canary rockfish	Coastwide	35	0	4.4	2.1	41.5
Chilipepper	S of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	5.4	0.3	5.7
Cowcod	S of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	0.5	0.0	0.5
Darkblotched rockfish	Coastwide	5	0	2.5	13.7	21.2
Dover sole	Coastwide	1,497	0	44.6	4.9	1,546.5
English sole	Coastwide	200	0	4.8	7.2	212.0
Lingcod	N of 40°10' N. lat.	250	0	6.7	12.1	268.8
Lingcod	S of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	0.8	1.4	2.2
Longnose skate	Coastwide	220	0	12.3	10.2	242.5
Longspine thornyhead	N of 34°27' N. lat.	30	0	14.4	0.1	44.5
Longspine thornyhead	S of 34°27' N. lat.	0	0	0.8	0.2	1.0
Pacific cod	Coastwide	500	0	0.1	0.0	500.2
Pacific ocean perch	N of 40°10' N. lat.	130	0	3.8	2.0	135.8
Pacific spiny dogfish	Coastwide	275	0	8.0	4.9	287.9

Species	Area	Tribal	EFP	Research	IOA	Set-aside Total
Pacific whiting	Coastwide	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Petrale sole	Coastwide	290	0	24.1	3.2	317.3
Quillback Rockfish	California	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sablefish	N of 36° N. lat.	*	0	40.7	--	40.7
Sablefish	S of 36° N. lat.	0	0	1.5	10.5	12.0
Shortspine thornyhead	Coastwide	40	0	9.3	3.4	52.7
Splitnose rockfish	S of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	4.1	0.0	4.1
Starry flounder	Coastwide	2	0	0.0	12.7	14.7
Widow rockfish	Coastwide	100	0	0.5	0.1	100.6
Yellowtail rockfish	N of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	4.9	2.0	6.9
Complexes						
Nearshore rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	1.5	0	0.1	0.6	2.2
Nearshore rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	0.5	1.4	1.9
Shelf rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	30	0	8.9	9.7	48.6
Shelf rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	9.4	4.0	13.4
Slope rockfish north	N of 40°10' N. lat.	36	0	5.0	9.1	50.1
Slope rockfish south	S of 40°10' N. lat.	0	0	1.3	0.2	1.5
Other fish	Coastwide	0	0	0.0	4.0	4.0
Other flatfish	Coastwide	60	0	18.6	46.9	125.5
Oregon black/blue/deacon rockfish	Oregon	0	0	0.0	0.5	0.5
Oregon cabezon/kelp greenling	Oregon	0	0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Washington cabezon/kelp greenling	Washington	2	0	0.0	0.0	2.0

*Sablefish north of 36° N. lat. is allocated to the Tribes at 10 percent of the sablefish north ACL, which is a share rather than a set-aside. The GMT will discuss all sablefish set-asides and allocations under AIC #9 in Supplemental GMT Report 2 of this agenda item.