

**GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON AMENDMENT 26:
 BLACKGILL ROCKFISH MANAGEMENT – FINAL ACTION**

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the materials in the advanced briefing book and received an overview from Mr. John DeVore and Dr. Jim Seger of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and Mr. Brian Hooper of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The GMT offers the following comments:

The main task for the Council is to consider reaffirming its Amendment 26 decision to remove blackgill rockfish from the slope rockfish complex south of 40° 10' N. lat. (“southern slope complex”) and, if they choose to reaffirm, decide whether or not to adopt Alternative 1 and allocate 59 percent of the blackgill rockfish allocation to non-trawl and 41 percent to trawl. Regardless of the Council’s decision, the GMT notes that this action poses less conservation risk now than during initial Amendment 26 discussions because the stock is now projected to be above the precautionary zone (estimated depletion of 40 percent in 2019)¹ and annual attainments have been less than recent and future annual catch limits (ACLs); (Figure 1). Based on the results of the 2017 update assessment, which projected that the stock will be healthy and future overfishing limits (OFLs) and ACLs will be higher, the GMT projects that ~75-100 mt of available blackgill rockfish will be uncaught annually.

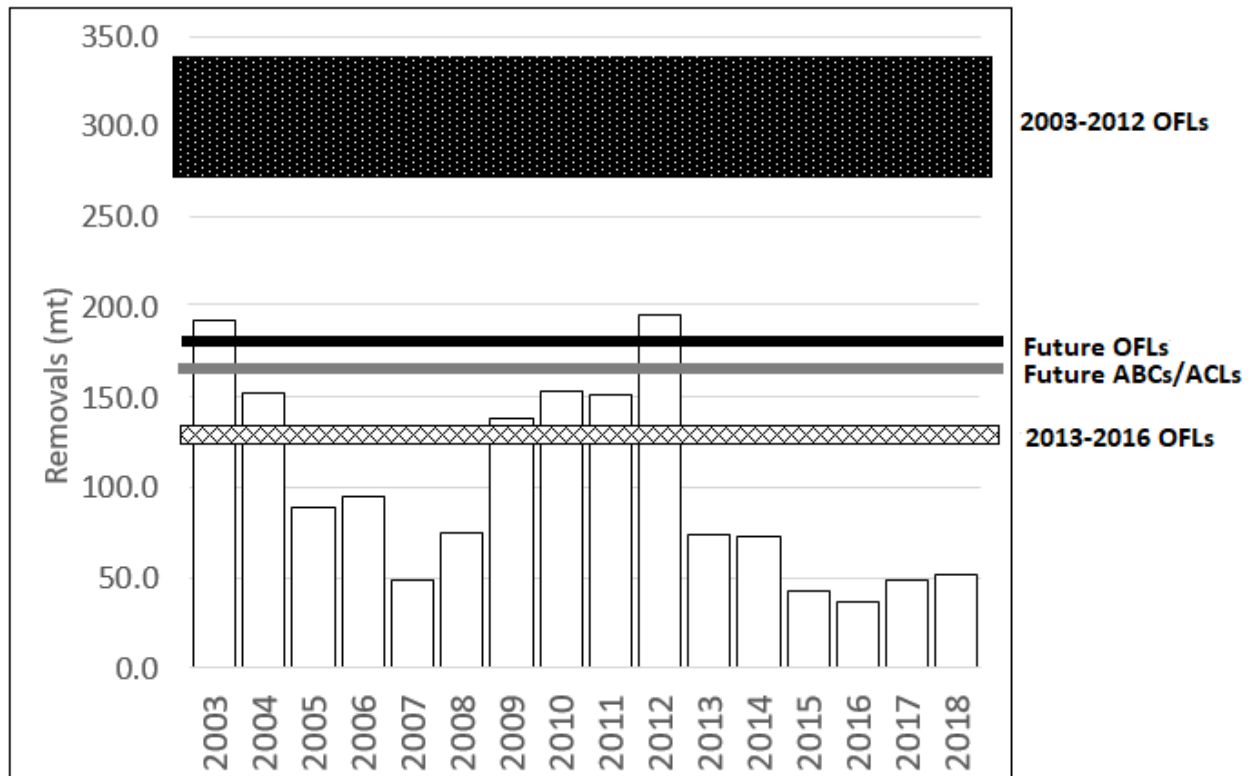


Figure 1. Historical southern blackgill rockfish total mortality compared to past and future OFL/ACL contributions. This data suggests that ~75-100 mt are expected to be uncaught.

¹ https://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/blackgill.2018.final_.pdf

In this report, the GMT discusses the merits of both the option to remove blackgill rockfish and the option to keep it in the southern slope complex; however, because this is mainly an allocative issue, we feel that it is inappropriate for us to make recommendations.

Alternative 1: Removing blackgill rockfish from the slope rockfish complex south of 40° 10' N lat.

Alternative 1 would both increase opportunity for the non-trawl fishery and, given low mortality compared to proposed allocations, be unlikely to greatly constrain the trawl fishery. Further, Alternative 1 would result in the issuance of an individual fishing quota (IFQ) specific to blackgill rockfish which should better allow the Council and NMFS to manage to the ACL.

Annual Vessel Limit Final Preferred Alternative

If the Council confirms Alternative 1 as the Final Preferred Alternative, the Council will need to select an annual vessel limit for blackgill rockfish. In September, the Council chose Alternative 3 (20 percent)² as the preliminary preferred alternative. The GMT sees merit to Alternative 3, because it would be consistent with maximum annual vessel limits for other species, which are all 20 percent, and ensure the participation of at least five boats. Alternative 3 would also be unlikely to constrain vessels, as hindcasting shows that annual vessel catches were typically below potential 20 percent annual vessel limits.

The GMT also see merit in Alternative 4 (30 percent) as it would increase the ability for vessels to further specialize in catching blackgill rockfish and/or co-occurring stocks and potentially increase IFQ landings in California. Alternative 4 could also further reduce potential constraints to individuals since there have been a few instances where vessels would have been above the proposed Alternative 3 annual vessel limits in retrospect³. However, while this could allow four vessels to take the entirety of the proposed allocation the GMT notes though that it is unlikely that four vessels would each take the full vessel limit.

No Action: Keeping blackgill rockfish in the complex

As stated above, a primary reason for originally considering Alternative 1 was to address a conservation concern of overfishing blackgill rockfish, which is now unlikely given the most recent stock assessment. Currently, however, the primary reason for keeping blackgill rockfish in the slope complex would be to ensure that blackgill rockfish does not become constraining for the trawl sector. This apprehension has arisen because a small number of boats, primarily those targeting petrale sole, made the majority of catch in the trawl sector, and low blackgill rockfish QP availability could make it difficult for them to cover incidental blackgill rockfish catch.

If the Council chooses No Action, then the Council should consider raising the non-trawl trip limits through the inseason process. The GMT would bring back more details and potential trip limits under Agenda Item G.9 based on Council action.

If the Council chooses No Action, keeping blackgill rockfish in the southern slope complex, the Council may want to consider alternative management measures, such as block area closures (BACs), to reduce mortality of blackgill rockfish in the IFQ trawl fishery. As described in [Agenda](#)

² The only species currently at the 20 percent maximum are arrowtooth flounder, Pacific cod, and starry flounder.

³Based on the proposed Alternative 1 trawl revised allocations

[Item G.4.a. NMFS Report 1](#), high catches from IFQ trawl gear occur primarily in 150-300 fathoms. However, after team discussion with the authors of the NMFS report, further analysis indicates that a BAC would be mostly effective between 150-250 fathoms (Figure 2). A BAC extending out to 300 fathoms would potentially be even more effective and could be analyzed as part of 2021-22 harvest specifications and management measures process, although a 300-fathom management line does not currently exist in regulation.

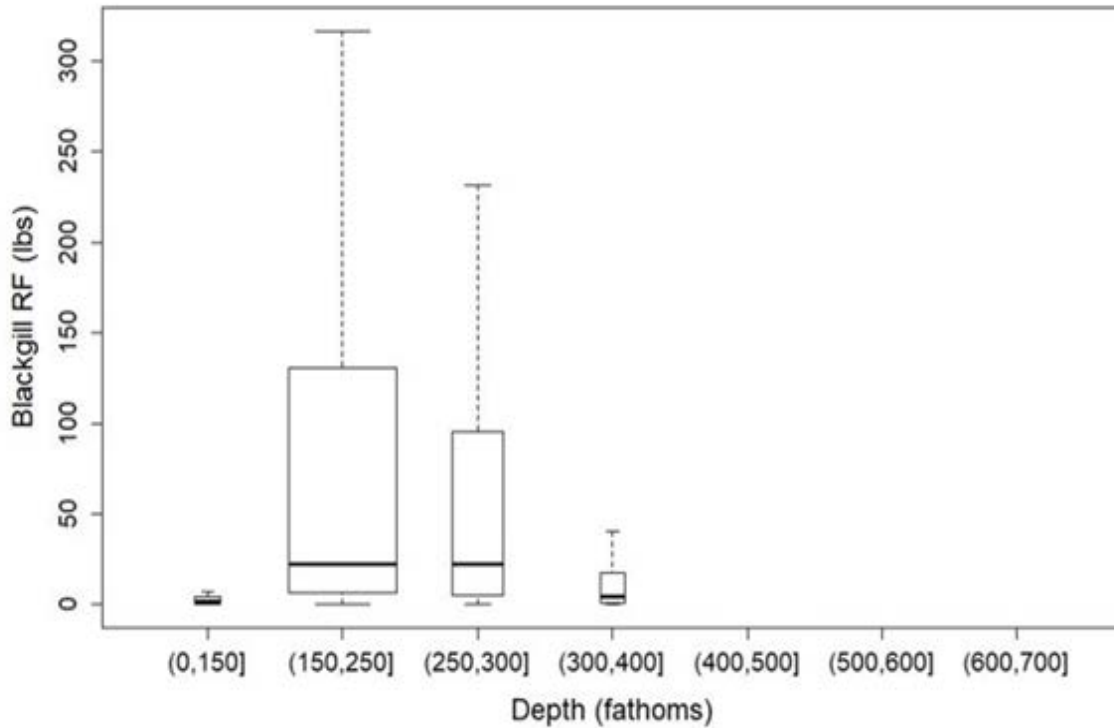


Figure 2. Revised NMFS Report 1 Figure 1, showing blackgill rockfish catch by depth (fathoms) for IFQ bottom trawl south of 40° 10' N lat. (2011-2017). Update includes a 150-250 fathom bin, with a sample size of 822 hauls, and a 250-30 fathom bin, with a sample size of 186 hauls.

PFMC
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