

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON THE TENTATIVE  
ADOPTION OF THE 2011-2012 RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL GROUND FISH  
FISHERY SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

*Advice from the Oregon Sport Advisory Committee*

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) met with members of its Sport Advisory Committee (SAC) on June 1, 2010 to discuss the proposed management measures for the 2011-2012 Oregon recreational groundfish fishery. As an advisory committee, SAC provides management advice specific to the sport groundfish and halibut fisheries, and is comprised of representatives of the charter and private sectors of the sport fishery, as well as a representative of port commissions. Membership is distributed coastwide in an effort to have representation of each of the coast areas and includes members from inland areas along the Willamette Valley and areas south.

At this meeting, ODFW staff summarized the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Council) preferred harvest levels for species that constrain the Oregon sport groundfish fishery (primarily yelloweye rockfish and cabezon) and the range of management measures that are proposed for this fishery. The comments received from the series of public meetings that were held in mid-May were also detailed (Agenda Item B.3.b; ODFW Report), and the same questions posed to the public in those meetings were asked of SAC. Figure 1 shows four options for the recreational groundfish fishery structure, including the option of allowing groundfish retention during the all-depth Pacific halibut openings. Figure 2 shows bag and sub-bag options for decreasing the cabezon impacts from the ocean boat portion of the recreational fishery. The following summary represents the discussion by SAC members.

1. How should the season be structured? If more yelloweye rockfish impacts are allowed, how should they be used; more all-depth months or groundfish retention during the all-depth halibut days?

Members of SAC discussed the options presented in Figure 1, however, did not come to a consensus. Most of the discussion centered on Options 2 and 3, assuming the Council's preliminary preferred yelloweye Annual Catch Limit (ACL) of 20 mt. All members of SAC would like to see more opportunities for anglers; however, they differed on if those opportunities should come in the form of fewer depth-restricted months or allowing groundfish retention during the Central Oregon all-depth Pacific halibut openings.

Removing the 40-fathom depth restriction during the month of April would allow for more offshore opportunities, during a time period when few if any other fishing opportunities are available. While removing the 40-fathom restriction during September would provide additional groundfish fishing opportunities, in most years, salmon and/or tuna opportunities are available during September. Additionally SAC discussed that weather affects the north coast and the south coast of Oregon differently, which would affect anglers ability to utilize additional months not restricted by depth.

The discussion on allowing groundfish retention during the all-depth halibut openings focused on the difference between anglers retaining truly incidentally caught groundfish and anglers targeting groundfish while halibut fishing. Given the recent, and anticipated continuing decrease in the Area 2A halibut quota, it is believed that there will be fewer all-depth halibut days, and potentially less yelloweye rockfish impacts, than are currently occurring. However, there was still concern over changes in angler behavior such as: fishing in different locations (locations that are currently avoided to avoid groundfish bycatch); or stopping on the way in from halibut fishing to fill bag limits of marine fish, that are not predictable in a model.

If the Council chooses a yelloweye rockfish coastwide ACL less than 20 mt, SAC expressed a desire to have the fishery as close to status quo as possible, in terms of bag limits, seasonal depth restrictions and other regulations.

## 2. How should cabezon impacts be reduced?

SAC discussed the need to reduce impacts to cabezon, given the new Oregon stock assessment, and the need to reduce all Oregon impacts to 48 mt by 2012. Currently cabezon is managed by a state harvest cap of 47.1 mt for commercial and ocean boat recreational fisheries. The shore and estuary recreational fishery and discard mortality account for an additional ~3.0 mt of impacts. SAC suggested that the shore and estuary and discard impacts be taken off the top of the ACL, then recreational and commercial fisheries allocated based on the current percentages of the state harvest cap. Most SAC members thought a partial year sub-bag limit would work as a way to decrease cabezon impacts, and still allow for a year-round fishery. SAC disagreed with public comment somewhat on the length of time for a sub-bag limit. The public requested the sub-bag limit go into affect for the same months as the depth restrictions, for ease of regulations. SAC would rather see the sub-bag limit in affect only in months necessary to keep total harvest below the recreational allocation. A minority of SAC members suggested status quo management (no sub-bag limit, go to non-retention of cabezon when the recreational allocation is achieved).

## 3. Other Comments from SAC

- reiterate the desire from the public meetings to allow (limited) canary rockfish retention. There is concern that as this species rebuilds, recreational fisheries are not allowed to show additional impacts, while other sectors are. This may lead to issues with future allocations between sectors. Additionally, anglers are reporting a large amount of canary rockfish bycatch, even while trying to avoid them, and it is a shame to have to release all of them.
- would like ODFW to provide more information and instruction on rockfish release devices and methods
- would like ODFW to improve education and education materials on identification of rockfish, specifically the orange and red rockfish
- agree with the public comments on developing an improved rockfish stock assessment survey
- set regulations in a manner that allows ODFW to have more flexibility managing the recreational fishery inseason

Option	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Est. Yelloweye Impacts (mt)		Est. Canary Impacts (mt)	
	Status quo			GF in halibut			Status quo		GF in halibut							
1	Open all depths			Open < 40 fm			Open all depths			2.1	2.5	2.4	2.8			
2	Open all depths			Open < 40 fm			Open all depths			2.3	2.6	2.5	3.0			
3	Open all depths			Open < 40 fm			Open all depths			2.5	2.8	2.7	3.1			
4	Open all depths			Open < 40 fm			Open all depths			2.9	3.21*	2.9	3.4			

\* exceeds the projected 3.0 mt yelloweye allocation, under the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (20 mt ACL)

Figure 1. Oregon recreational fishery seasonal depth structure and projected yelloweye and canary rockfish impacts with and without groundfish retention during the all-depth halibut openings, for 2011-2012.

Option	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Ocean Boat Cabezon Impacts (mt)
1	7												20.0
2	3												19.7
3	2												19.3
4	1												3.8
5	7			1			7						15.0
6	7			1			7						12.0
7	7			1			7						8.8
8	7			1			7						6.1

Figure 2. Oregon ocean boat recreational fishery cabezon impacts modeled under varying seasonal bag/sub-bag limits.

*Advice from the Oregon Commercial Nearshore Fishery Advisory Panel*

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) met with members of its Commercial Nearshore Fishery Advisory Panel (CNFAP) on June 1, 2010 to discuss potential inseason management measures for 2010 and upcoming groundfish specifications and management measures under consideration for 2011-2012. As an advisory panel, the CNFAP provides management advice specific to the commercial nearshore fishery. The panel is made up of fishermen that participate in the state-permitted limited entry commercial nearshore fishery for rockfish, cabezon and greenling species as well as buyers of fish caught by this sector. The CNFAP members come from most of the ports along the Oregon coast where landings from this fishery are made, represent all gear types used in the fishery, and include those with interests in both the live fish and fresh fish markets.

At this meeting ODFW staff summarized information regarding the potential in-season 2010 changes and the 2011-2012 management options that will be evaluated at the Pacific Fisheries

Management Council (PFMC) meeting in June. Input from industry members was solicited for four specific items:

1. 2010 in-season management options to reduce yelloweye rockfish impacts
2. 2011-2012 management options for the nearshore fishery
3. Measures to reduce cabezon impacts
4. State management options for the above three items

### **Response of Participants:**

#### *2010 In-Season Management Options for the Nearshore Fishery:*

Staff discussed measures that may be necessary to be implemented inseason in response to the recent court decision on reducing the yelloweye rockfish optimum yield for 2010. There was a strong agreement among the participants that the nearshore fishery should not be required to further reduce their take of any species. Reasons included that the fishery had been significantly downsized initially and that the large reductions necessary to see significant reductions in impacts to yelloweye rockfish would inevitably force the fishermen and their associated industries out of business. In terms of the management options presented, a majority of participants would prefer to reduce trip limits and the overall cap in order to keep the fishery open as long as possible, rather than fishing at the current rates and forcing an in-season closure. They pointed out that it would be more practical to have a constant, if reduced, supply of fish for the buyers and processors. Some participants suggested that a slight decrease in cabezon would not adversely affect them, but others disagreed. It was also suggested that some could give up black rockfish, particularly for those on the south coast, where black rockfish is not a focus of the live-fish fishery, but those that fish primarily black and blue rockfish did not agree with this option. Participants repeatedly stressed the importance of the nearshore fishery as a stop-gap during tough times in the fishing industry coast-wide and one participant noted that this was the only fishery in which he participated in.

Certain participants thought that reducing other nearshore rockfish (ONSR) might be a viable option to reduce impacts. However, there was also the feeling that black rockfish would not be enough to sustain the fishery and that in order to maintain current income levels the fish captured for the live-fish fishery shouldn't be reduced. Participants from the north coast pointed out that they rely heavily on black rockfish because there is no market for live-fish, and that there would need to be extremely large reductions of the black/blue rockfish quota to significantly reduce yelloweye rockfish impacts. Participants also stressed that lost income from a reduced nearshore fishery of any kind could not be made up through other fisheries. Participants were frustrated that decisions regarding the fishery were, in essence, out of ODFW's hands (PFMC's as well) and in the hands of the court.

It was noted that Oregon and Washington had already eliminated their research quotas in order to reduce yelloweye rockfish impacts, and participants expressed conflicting views with this particular point. Some pointed out that a further reduction in the knowledge utilized for stock assessments could lead to long-term negative effects within the nearshore fishery, while others expressed that research should be the "first thing to go".

### *2011-2012 Management Options:*

Staff discussed alternatives for management of this fishery in 2011-2012. Information provided included a description of the modeling approach that has been taken and the need for a large range of alternatives. Staff noted that although there will be a new federal annual catch limit (ACL) set for cabezon which would likely require a reduction from the present Oregon landing cap, yelloweye rockfish impacts were likely to be a more constraining factor for the fishery. It was pointed out that the GMT model was based on the average catch over the last 3 years and that Oregon landing caps for both black rockfish and ONSR catch were higher in 2009 than in the previous two years. Thus the “Status quo” presented to Council was roughly a 21 mt (16%) reduction for black rockfish catch from 2009 catch levels and the options being examined by the Council showing 33 – 69% percent reductions in black rockfish and greenling catch and 44 – 79% reductions in catch for other species in order to reduce impacts to yelloweye rockfish were reductions from the 3-year average, not from the present landing caps or 2009 catch. The group discussed the management tools available for this fishery and provided the following comments:

### *Gear Concerns:*

Gear was a reoccurring theme in the discussion, although some felt that it should be less of an issue because a diversity of gear kept the fishery strong. There was significant frustration expressed with use of longline gear. It was suggested that longlines should be banned or restricted in this fishery, due to potentially higher rates of yelloweye bycatch. Participants suggested that it was less experienced longliners that increased yelloweye impacts for the entire fleet, and that the more experienced longline fishermen knew how to avoid yelloweye rockfish when fishing. Some participants did not feel a complete ban on the gear was necessary or fair and suggested that a hook limit might be enforceable, but that it might not actually reduce overall effort. Other participants did not feel that discussion of gear was appropriate and that by limiting longline, effort would shift to other parts of the fishery.

### *Data quality and management:*

There was significant frustration with the quality of the federal observer program data and a certain amount of confusion with the correct way to fill out the fish tickets. Several fishermen expressed frustration with the lack of options for recourse with respect to the observer data and that many observers were inaccurate when recording certain species, particularly yelloweye rockfish, and the depth and location of fishing operations. Participants also expressed concern about the accuracy of the nearshore model being utilized by the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to calculate yelloweye impacts based on observer data. One participant felt that bycatch of yelloweye was lower in relation to cabezon than for most other species rather than higher as the GMT model predicts. Participants were encouraged to fish as they would normally regardless of having observers on board, as this will increase the quality of the data. Fish tickets were also brought up, with confusion on how to specify the type of gear used, particularly with longlines.

### *Management measures:*

Similar to discussions about 2010 inseason management measures, there was strong agreement among panel members that the nearshore fishery should not be required to further reduce their take of any species. The social and economic impacts from the large reductions in catch of targeted species required for the relatively small reductions in impacts to yelloweye rockfish predicted by the model were deemed unacceptable. Several participants noted the relatively

small portion of yelloweye rockfish allocated to the commercial nearshore to start with compared to some other fishery sectors.

Most participants felt that if reductions to targeted catch were implemented, keeping the fishery open throughout the year by lowering 2-month trip limits was preferable than shutting the fishery down early or for closing selected periods during the year. The consistent availability of fish for market, whether for the live fish or fresh fish market, was clearly stated to be important to the viability of businesses. One participant suggested that impacts to yelloweye rockfish would be reduced with a closure during certain months; others disagreed and suggested that yelloweye rockfish were more likely to be encountered in specific areas throughout the year. Closures during the year were also considered to be problematic by the fish buyers who depend on a reliable supply for market.