

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON MANAGEMENT
MEASURE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE 2011-2012 WASHINGTON RECREATIONAL
GROUNDFISH FISHERIES

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held public meetings on December 10, 2009; February 11, 2010; March 31, 2010; and May 7, 2010 to develop and discuss recreational bottomfish proposals for 2011 and 2012. The intent of the proposed alternatives is to maintain low levels of incidental catch of overfished rockfish, primarily yelloweye, when anglers are targeting halibut and lingcod, while providing for quality recreational fishing experiences.

Depth restrictions and area closures have been used for several years to keep the fishery focused in shallower water and away from known yelloweye rockfish areas. This has resulted in reduced catches of both yelloweye and canary rockfish, and increased survivability of released rockfish.

Based on the input provided, WDFW would like to offer the following as preferred alternatives for the Council's consideration:

Coastwide (Marine Catch Areas 1-4)

Status quo seasons and sublimits for lingcod (two per angler per day) and rockfish (10 per angler per day) would remain in place.

Relative to the aggregate bottomfish limit, WDFW prefers Alternative 2, which is to reduce the bag limit to 12 bottomfish. While the current limit is 15, angler interview data indicate that 99.9% of the anglers do not retain more than 12 bottomfish.

Cabezon are subject to the aggregate bottomfish limit, but currently do not have a separate sublimit in coastal waters; however, there is a sublimit of two cabezon inside Puget Sound (i.e., east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line and in Marine Catch Areas 5-13). As the status of cabezon off Washington is unknown and catches have recently increased on the coast, WDFW would prefer to place a sublimit of two cabezon per angler per day, which would promote consistency between the coast and Puget Sound.

North Coast (Marine Catch Areas 3 and 4)

WDFW prefers Alternative 2, which is: Prohibit retention of bottomfish seaward of 20 fms from June 1 through September 30 in Areas 3 and 4A, and seaward of 20 fms in Area 4B year-round, except on days halibut fishing is open; cannot fish for, retain, or possess bottomfish or halibut in YRCA.

South Coast (Marine Catch Area 2)

WDFW prefers Alternative 2, which is: Prohibit retention of bottomfish, except rockfish, seaward of 30 fms from March 15 through June 15, except sablefish and Pacific cod retention is allowed May 1 through June 15; no retention of bottomfish, except lingcod, during primary halibut season; no retention of lingcod south of 46 deg. 58' and seaward of 30 fms on Fridays and Saturdays from July 1 through August 31; and cannot fish for, retain, or possess bottomfish or halibut in South Coast YRCA and Westport Offshore YRCA.

Columbia Area (Marine Catch Area 1)

Minimal amounts (i.e., less than 0.1 mt) of yelloweye and canary rockfish are caught in Marine Catch Area 1; therefore, WDFW prefers to keep the status quo bottomfish fishing regulations in place through 2011 and 2012.

WDFW believes that the range of management measure alternatives presented above is sufficient to stay within the state harvest targets or guidelines for yelloweye and canary rockfish. We are committed to monitoring our catch inseason and will take action as appropriate to ensure our harvest targets or guidelines are not exceeded.