

Proposed Management Measures for Recreational Groundfish

Fishery in 2011 and 2012

Mr. Ortmann and Esteemed Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Council on this critical subject matter.

California Angers last enjoyed a full season of fishing in the year 2000. Upon the declaration of various species being overfished and promulation of the RCA, our fishing opportunities have been dramatically reduced in the Northern California coastal area. We currently experience a four month groundfish season in the north and a three month season in the north central area as a result of the RCA and YRCA closures and restriction to fish within 20 fm. This has had a severe economic effect on our coastal communities.

Historically, our fleets have been split 90% commercial and 10% recreational. The peak of the commercial fishery was back in the early 1980 with 6908 commercial vessels in CA of which 3200 were in the north, now having been reduced to only 375 active vessels in the north. The tonnage of fish caught reduced in Humboldt County from 38 MT down to 13 MT in the same time frame. Revenues have reduced commercially from 15 million to 14 million, not factoring in inflation. In 2007 and 2008, the fleet has been reduced by 30% statewide and 42% in the north area. Eureka had only 137 active vessels land fish in 2009.

Recreationally, we have about 8,000 vessels registered in the north area, most of which sit idle due to lack of opportunity. The groundfish season was cut to two months in 2008 and with no salmon season in 2009 we have seen the closure of many businesses and severe economic loss to all other marine businesses. Historically, the resource areas of fishing, agriculture and forestry produced two thirds of our employment. Those areas provide only 30% employment currently. Fishing tourism is a critical part of our economy. As an illustration, 12,000 fishing visitors came to the small town of Trinidad in 2007. Fishing tourists dropped to a fraction of that level in the 2008 rockfish closure season. The uncertainty of fishing is witnessed in cancelled vacations and travelers not willing to schedule in advance not knowing if there will be any fishing during their reservation period. The reduced seasons are costing our area tens of millions of dollars in lost revenue that cannot be supplemented by other methods. Our current unemployment in the north has topped 14%.

The recent court decision lowering the YE incidental by catch to 14MT has heightened

this anxiety where the local fishing communities don't know when the season will be closed. As such, captains are taking unnecessary risks in dangerous bar conditions and rough water conditions to make the 25 mile run down to Cape Mendocino for groundfish while the opportunity to fish still exists. We live in an area with an abundance of groundfish while being restricted from fishing for that resource. Shelter Cove, in particular, has abundant fish biomass, but also has the only deep pinnacles and canyons close to shore, that happens to be a favored habitat of YE. They have only a 90 day season.

We appreciate the management levels as put forth in Alternative 1 by the CDFG. The latitude line proposed at Viscaino to separate that area from the 40 degree 10 minute area and north should lessen some of the anxiety of our charter fleet and recreational fisherman. Economically, the Eureka area recreationally generates about \$7 million per month through local and visiting fishing vessels. The northern area normally has about 13,500 anglers per month throughout the season. We have seen a 42% drop in revenue in the last two years due to fishing closures and loss of opportunities. To say this is a crisis for us is not an exaggeration. We are witnessing a fishing community in rapid decline. The Shelter Cove launch owner has shut down all the facilities for this 2010 year due to the lack of economic activity. The short 90 day season, weather restrictions, uncertainty and probable regulation detrimental to his profitability caused him to shut down his facilities. He is the sole marine business launch facility in this small community.

To repeat, the effects of the YE restrictions are having severe adverse affects on our local communities. The Goals and Objectives of the FMP were specifically designed to prevent this kind of aggressive conservation action to the detriment of local communities. Conservation goal #3, Economic Goals # 6 & 7, and Social Factors #15, 16 and 17 speak directly to such aggressive rebuilding action. We would ask the Council to adopt management measures for the 2011 and 2012 years taking the FMP goals into consideration and support the Alternative 1 Management Measures for the Recreational Groundfish Fishery as presented by the CDFG in Agenda item B.3.a Supplemental CDFG Report 2. Alternatives 2 and 3 create such short seasons in the north central area that they effectively eliminate fishing opportunity when the weather constraints are factored in with the YE and RCA constraints. Our smaller coastal communities are bearing the brunt of conditions caused by other fleets or nationalities. That is both unfair and in contravention to goals as written in the FMP. We implore the Council to be fair and reasonable when setting these new regulations for the next two year cycle.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Council.

Tom Marking
Humboldt Area Saltwater Anglers
GAP sports fishing representative