OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON ESTIMATED ANGLER TRIP PROJECTIONS UNDER VARIOUS DEPTH RESTRICTIONS DUE TO REDUCED YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH ACLS

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) staff examined the potential impacts to the number of bottomfish angler trips due to reduced yelloweye rockfish allocations, and associated depth restriction regulations necessary to keep Oregon recreational harvest below those allocations. Data was examined at the port and coastwide level. The communities of Astoria, Florence, Winchester Bay and Port Orford are not included in this analysis as those ports account for less than 1% of the recreational bottomfish effort. Charleston and Bandon are combined due to limitations in recreational observer data.

This analysis assumed that angler effort by depth restriction area is proportional to fishing grounds area. In this analysis, depth requirements during the months of April through September were modified, and available Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) lines shallower than 40 fathoms (fm) were considered. There was insufficient data to estimate effort occurring shoreward and seaward of the 40 fm RCA line during all depth periods (very few observer trips occurred during all depth periods since closures began), therefore staff did not consider depth based closures in months that are already open in all depths, or liberalizing months which are currently closed seaward of the 40 fm RCA line.

Staff used GIS to estimate the recreational fishing area shoreward of the 40, 25 and 20 fm RCA lines on a coastwide basis and around seven communities. Figure 1 shows the percentage of the recreational bottomfish fishing grounds in three depth bins (< 20 fm, 20-25 fm, and 25-40 fm) for each port, and coastwide.

For a yelloweye rockfish annual catch limit (ACL) greater than the status quo (status quo being prior to the recent court ruling) optimum yield (OY) of 17 metric tons (mt) ODFW may be able to liberalize the seasonal depth restrictions or allow groundfish retention during the all-depth Pacific halibut recreational openings. While staff was unable to model the change in angler trips, it is assumed that these actions will entice more anglers to participate in the fishery, as more areas will be open and the potential for more desirable species, such as lingcod, are made available.

For a yelloweye rockfish ACL lower than 17 mt ODFW will have to move the seasonal depth restrictions into shallower water, employing the 25 or 20 fm RCA line. Based on the percentage of area lost with tightening depth restrictions, ODFW estimated the change in the number of bottomfish angler trips. It was assumed that: (1) 50 percent of the bottomfish anglers that would have participated under status quo management (17 mt yelloweye ACL, April through September restricted shoreward of the 40 fm RCA line), would move to the shallower fishing grounds and 50 percent of the anglers would not participate, and (2) angling effort is proportional to area of the fishing grounds. Table 1 shows the estimated bottomfish trips by port under the 40, 25, and 20 fm depth restrictions, the decrease in trips from the 40 fm restriction level, and the percent of trips lost by port and coastwide.

Restricting the bottomfish fishery shoreward of the 25 fm RCA line from April through September is estimated to reduce the total number of angler trips for the Oregon coast by 2 percent; however some ports will see a greater percentage reduction in trips than others. Specifically, under the 25 fm restriction, Garibaldi and Gold Beach are each projected to see a 9% reduction in angler trips. Similarly, under a 20 fm restriction, the percent reduction in bottomfish angler trips is 6 percent coastwide. Garibaldi is projected to experience a 23 percent reduction in angler trips, Gold Beach a 17 percent reduction, and Charleston/Bandon a 10 percent reduction; while the ports of Depoe Bay, Newport and Brookings are each projected to have less than a 5 percent reduction in angler trips.

Those ports where depth restrictions result in the largest reductions in available fishing grounds are also likely to see declines in catch per angler as the ability to search for schools of fish is limited. Over the long term, this is likely to cause additional reductions in angler trips originating from those communities. Reductions in angler trips will impact the ability of these communities to maintain essential infrastructure for recreational fishing such as marinas, jetties and breakwaters, navigable channels, fuel docks, bait and tackle retailers, and lodging facilities.

The commercial nearshore fishery is already restricted shoreward of the 20 fm RCA line. Restricting the recreational fishery shoreward of the 20 fm RCA line as well will further concentrate fishing effort into small areas, with the potential for localized depletion and gear or sector conflicts. This is an ongoing concern for both the recreational and commercial participants, particularly along the southern Oregon coast.

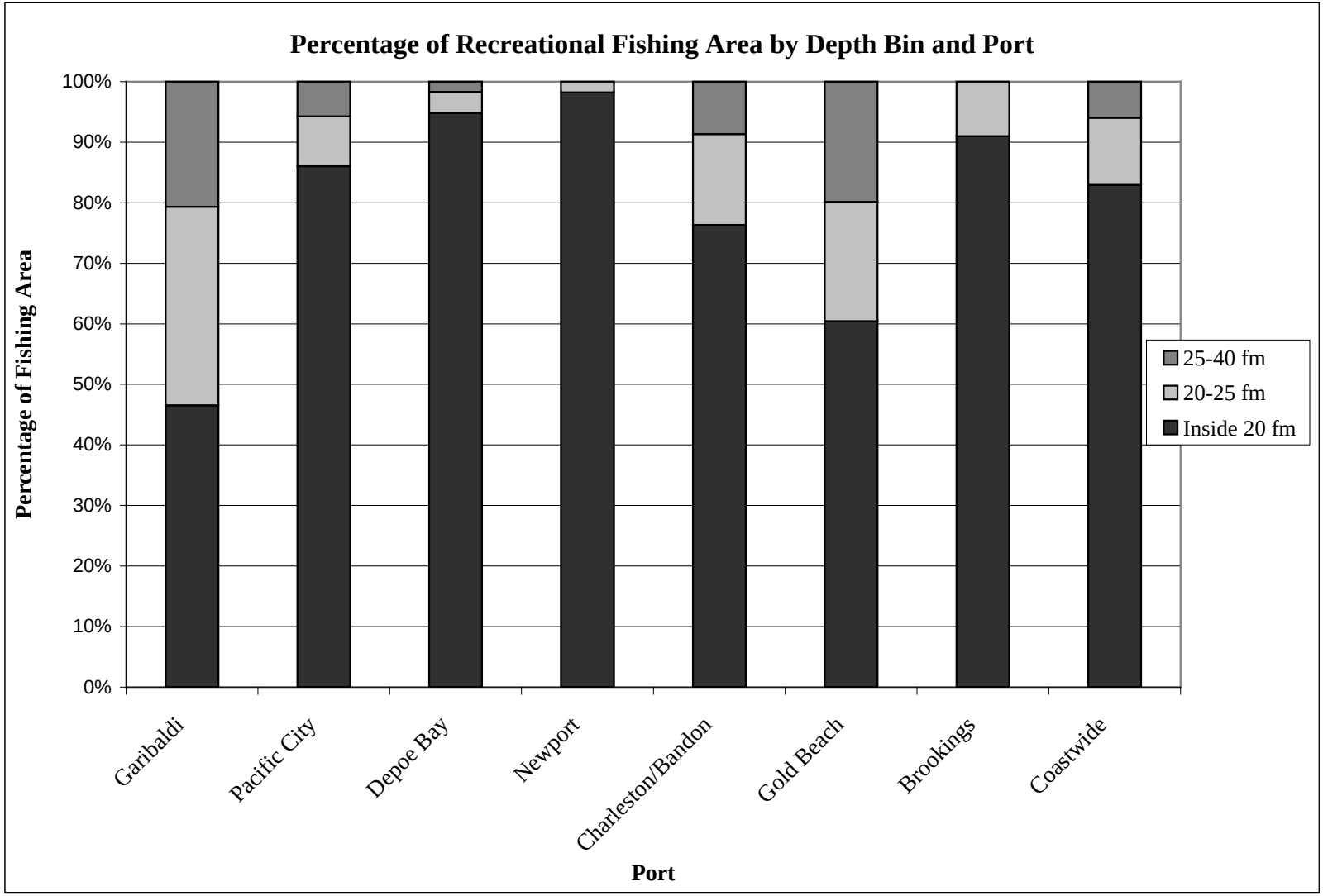

Figure 1. Percentage of Recreational Fishing Area by Depth Bin and Port for the Oregon Coast.

Table 1. Bottomfish angler trips and percent reduction under 40, 25, and 20 fm depth restrictions.

YE ACL Alternative	Alt 1 (20 mt)	Alt 2 (17 mt) status quo	Alt 2 (13 mt)					
Depth Restriction Scenarios	**May-Aug inside 40 fm**	**April-Sept inside 40 fm**	**April-Sept inside 25 fm**			**April-Sept inside 20 fm**		
Port	**Trips**	**Trips**	**Trips**	**Reduction in Trips**	**Percent Reduction**	**Trips**	**Reduction in Trips**	**Percent Reduction**
Garibaldi/Tillamook	> 5,343	5,343	4,867	476	9%	4,112	1,231	23%
Pacific City	> 3,445	3,445	3,365	80	2%	3,249	196	6%
Depoe Bay	> 11,217	11,217	11,134	83	1%	10,966	251	2%
Newport	> 16,293	16,293	16,293	0	0%	16,177	116	1%
Charleston/Bandon	> 11,624	11,624	11,184	440	4%	10,421	1,203	10%
Gold Beach	>3,443	3,443	3,145	298	9%	2,849	594	17%
Brookings	> 18,268	18,268	18,268	0	0%	17,562	706	4%
Total	**> 69,633**	**69,633**	**68,256**	**1,377**	**2%**	**65,336**	**4,298**	**6%**