

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE INFORMATIONAL REPORT ON GROUNDFISH INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

At its December 2011 meeting, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) took several regulatory actions that affect the 2012 Oregon recreational groundfish fishery. Those actions include adjustments to depth restrictions, implementing a seasonal structure for cabezon retention, and providing additional management lines to facilitate future inseason actions. This report is for informational purposes only; concurrent federal action is not required to allow for flexible inseason management by the State of Oregon.

In three out of the last four years, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) took action inseason to restrict the recreational groundfish fishery to waters shoreward of a line approximating 20 fathoms. This action was necessary to reduce the potential of exceeding the Oregon recreational harvest guideline for yelloweye rockfish. Limiting the fishery to shallower waters reduces the number of encounters with yelloweye (and canary) rockfish and reduces the depth dependent mortality rate applied to those fish that are encountered. Four public meetings were held (Astoria, Newport, Brookings, and Charleston) and an online survey tool was used to obtain public input on proposed actions. Based on feedback from the public and ODFW staff recommendations, the OFWC modified state regulations to limit the recreational groundfish fishery to waters shoreward of 30 fathoms from April 1 through September 30, instead of 40 fathoms as was adopted previously. This action is intended to lessen the potential for inseason action and the associated disruption to the fishery.

Additionally, the Oregon recreational fishery has met its state landing cap for cabezon between mid-July and early September each year since 2004. Via the same public input process mentioned above, ODFW solicited input from the public on how to structure the cabezon component to the groundfish fishery. Based on that feedback and staff recommendations, the OFWC approved allowing retention of cabezon from April 1 through September 30 under a one fish sub-bag limit. Retention of cabezon is prohibited outside of that timeframe. These regulations were designed to keep the cabezon catch within the fishery's state landing cap, while still allowing (limited) retention during the peak fishing season.

Finally, the OFWC added two management lines, at Cape Lookout (45° 20' 30" N lat.) and Cape Blanco (42° 50' 20" N lat.), that may be used inseason, if actions become necessary. Depth restrictions in the recreational groundfish fishery impact some ports, such as Garibaldi and Gold Beach, much more than other ports, such as Newport and Depoe Bay (see Agenda Item H.2.c. ODFW Letter 1, March 2011). These two lines will provide the flexibility to structure inseason actions to lessen differential impacts as much as possible.

ODFW will continue to monitor the Oregon recreational fisheries inseason and take actions if they become necessary.