

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON INSEASON
RECREATIONAL FISHERY YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH IMPACTS

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) took precautionary action pre-season, implementing a more restrictive depth restriction for the recreational bottomfish fishery during the peak of the season (30 fathoms instead of 40 fathoms from April 1 to Sept 30) to account for variability in effort and yelloweye rockfish catch rates. Finalized August catch estimates received in early October show that Oregon recreational fisheries attained the yelloweye rockfish harvest guideline of 2.4 metric tons (mt). Through the end of August, 2.7 mt of yelloweye rockfish are estimated to have been impacted.

Preliminary September data indicates that yelloweye rockfish impacts are 0.15 mt for the month. An additional 0.07 mt (October – December) are projected if the bottomfish fishery remains open for the remainder of the year. The total impacts are projected to be 2.9 mt for the year if the fishery remains open, which is 0.5 mt above the harvest guideline. If the fishery were to close immediately, the estimated impacts are 2.9 mt (no different than if the fishery were left open) due to the little effort that occurs in the final quarter of the year. At the September council meeting, there was a residual of 1.8 mt of yelloweye rockfish in the scorecard (Agenda Item H.5.b., Supplemental GMT Report, September 2012).

Greater than projected encounter rates of yelloweye rockfish were observed in the bottomfish fishery from April through August. Bottomfish effort and impacts from the halibut fishery were similar to previous years. Since ODFW first began collecting depth data for bottomfish trips (2009-2010), catch rates of yelloweye rockfish in depth bins shallower than 30 fathoms have increased dramatically each year, except for a decrease in 0-10 fathoms during 2012 (Figure 1). Compared to the 2009-2010 period, encounter rates in the 10-20 fathoms depth bin increased by ~45 percent for 2011 and ~85 percent for 2012. For 20-25 fathoms, encounter rates increased by ~75 percent and ~110 percent, respectively, and for 25-30 fathoms, encounter rates increased by ~110 percent and ~490 percent, respectively.

Information received from charter captains and private anglers indicate that it may not be possible to avoid yelloweye rockfish, regardless of where they fish. In the past, encounters were infrequent if they avoided yelloweye rockfish “hotspots”, but now they frequently encounter them on reefs that historically did not have yelloweye rockfish encounters. Charter captains that ODFW spoke to, also noted that the majority (up to 70 percent) of the yelloweye rockfish they are currently encountering are juvenile, or “the white striped” yelloweye rockfish.

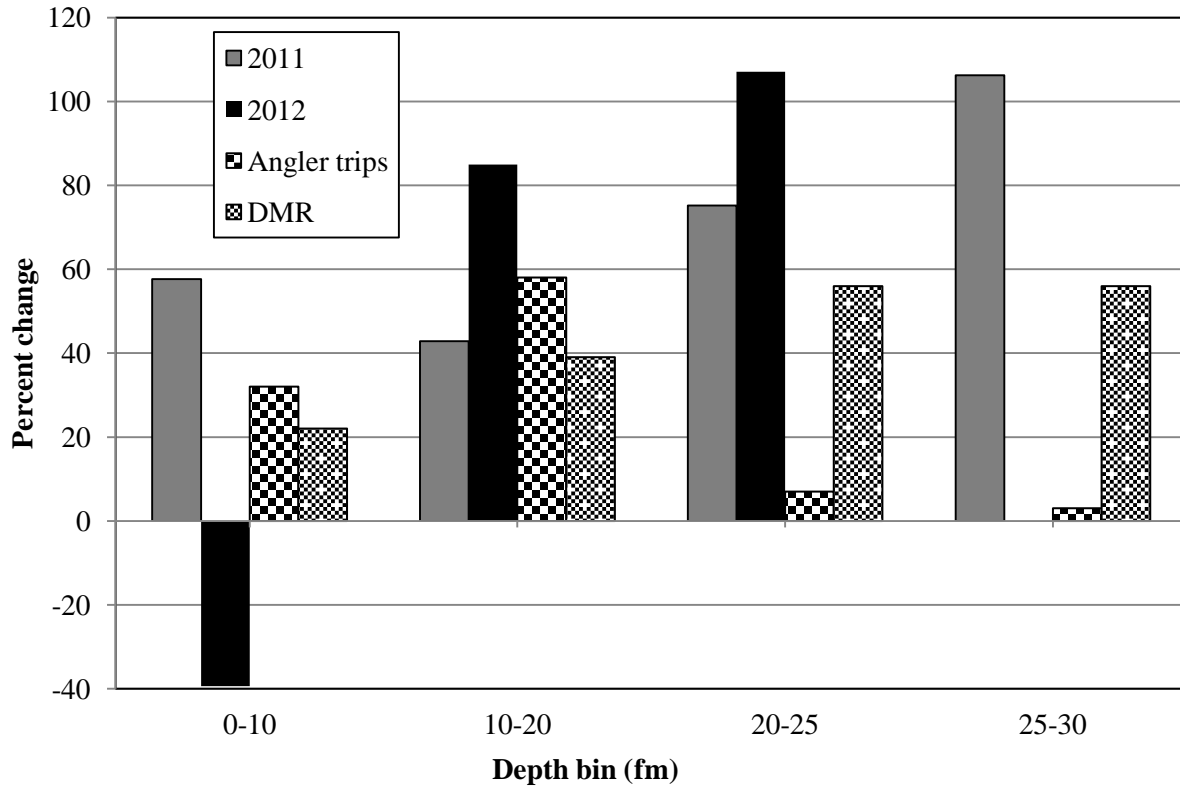


Figure 1. Percent change in yelloweye rockfish catch rates since 2009-2010 for depth bins shallower than 30 fm for the Oregon recreational bottomfish fishery. The change in the 2012 catch rate for 25-30 fm (490%) is not shown because it would disrupt the scale. To illustrate where yelloweye rockfish impacts occur, percent of bottomfish effort and yelloweye rockfish discard mortality rates (DMR) by depth bin are also shown.