

Preliminary Practical Range of Management Specification Options for California's 2011-2012 Commercial and Recreational Groundfish Fisheries

COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL

The California Department of Fish and Game is proposing changes to the 2011-2012 groundfish regulations with the intent of remaining within harvest limits, particularly for overfished species. Regulations not specifically referenced in this report will remain status quo from 2009-2010.

Changes to Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) lines

Proposals from Industry to modify RCA lines to more closely approximate depth contours are being reviewed by CDFG and Enforcement staff.

COMMERCIAL

Most commercial groundfish fishery options will be covered under the general range of federal commercial options. For the nearshore fishery and cabezon, greenlings, and California sheephead, regional allocation or setting of regional TACs will not be considered for 2011-2012. Commercial management options will implement regional needs where possible and include the following considerations:

Cabezon, Greenlings, and California Sheephead

- Cabezon: consider even distribution of trip limits throughout the year
- Greenlings and Sheephead: Status quo trip limits

Lingcod

Size Limit

- Maintain status quo size limit of 24 inches TL

Spawning Closure

- Status quo: statewide spawning closure December – April
- Option: consider modification of spawning closure when nearshore is open (i.e., allow lingcod retention year round north of 40°10' N lat.; allow retention all months except March-April south of 40°10' N lat.)

North of 40°10' N lat.

Minor Nearshore Rockfish options

- Consider status quo trip limits of *"7,000 lb/2 months, no more than 1,200 lb of which may be species other than black rockfish"*; effective year round
- Consider lowering limits as necessary to stay within harvest limits

South of 40°10' N lat.

Shallow and Deeper Nearshore

- Consider status quo trip limits
- Consider lowering limits as necessary to stay within harvest limits

California Scorpionfish

- Consider status quo trip limit of “1,200 lb/2 months” effective year round
- Consider increasing trip limit

Removal of Other Flatfish Gear Restriction

- Status quo: “when fishing for ‘other flatfish,’ vessels using hook-and-line gear with no more than 12 hooks per line, using hooks no larger than ‘Number 2’ hooks, which measure 11 mm point to shank, and up to two 1 lb weights per line are not subject to the RCA”
- Option: no hook or weight restriction for “other flatfish”

Commercial Analyses Removed from Consideration

- Modification of lingcod size limit from 24 inches TL to 22 inches TL

RECREATIONAL

The California Department of Fish and Game is proposing the following options for the 2011-2012 recreational groundfish management cycle:

Changes in Management Area Season Lengths

Season lengths may be changed within each Groundfish Management Area as needed to remain within the harvest guidelines, while providing as much fishing opportunity as possible.

Changes in Depth Restrictions in Groundfish Management Areas

Depth restrictions may be changed within each Groundfish Management Area as needed to remain within the harvest guidelines, while providing access to as much habitat as possible. The following change is proposed for California Scorpionfish in the Southern Management Area:

- Status quo: Open 10 months at <60 fm, 2 months at <40 fm
- Option: Open 12 months at <60 fm

Elimination of the 10 fm Depth Closure around the Farallon Islands and Noonday Rock

- Status Quo: Waters less than 10 fm (60 ft.) in depth around the Farallon Islands and Noonday Rock are closed at all times for all groundfish species.
- Option: The 10 fm depth restriction around the Farallon Islands and Noonday rock would be eliminated, allowing fishing in areas within 10 fms where fishing is not otherwise prohibited under the MPA designations.

Combine the South-Central Morro Bay and South-Central Monterey Bay Management Areas

- Status quo: There are currently 6 management areas, including the South-Central Morro Bay and South-Central Monterey Bay Management Areas.
- Option: Combine South-Central Morro Bay and Monterey Bay Areas between 37°11' N lat. and 34°27' N lat to simplify regulations since catch rates are very similar in the two areas. The existing management line at Lopez Point separating

the two management areas may be used to implement inseason area-specific management measures, if needed.

Additional Management Line at Cape Vizcaino

- Status quo: Currently, there are no management lines identified between Fort Bragg and Shelter Cove, both of which are included in the North-Central North of Point Arena Management Area.
- Option: An additional management line will be established at Cape Vizcaino in the North-Central North of Point Arena Management Area. As an inseason action, this management area could be divided at Cape Vizcaino in order to close the northern portion (Shelter Cove) to groundfish fishing if yelloweye rockfish catch accrues more rapidly than expected, but leave the southern portion (Fort Bragg) open.

Lingcod Spawning Closure in the Southern Management Area

- Status Quo: Closed 4 months (January, February, March and December)
- Option: Closed 2 months (for the spawning period in January, February) in the Southern Management Area and open depth of the CCA.

2011-2012 Rockfish, Cabezon and Greenlings (RCG) Bag Limits Under Consideration

- Status quo: 10 fish (not including lingcod)
- Options: RCG complex limit (all rockfish, cabezon, and greenlings) 6–10 fish, and include lingcod as a sub-bag limit within the RCG complex (2-4 lingcod within the total RCG bag limit)

RCG Sub-bag limits:

Cabezon (statewide):

- Status quo: 2 fish
- Option: 2–3 fish

Lingcod (statewide):

- Status quo: 2 fish
- Option: 2–4 fish

2011-2012 Lingcod Size Limit Under Consideration

- Status quo: 24 inches
- Option: 22 inches; this will necessitate a reduced fillet length restriction

Revision of Depth Restrictions in the Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA)

- Status quo: Currently, only Nearshore rockfish and a few associated groundfish species may be retained in the CCA in depths shallower than 20 fm.
- Option: Increase the maximum depth restriction from 20 fm to a depth between 30 and 40 fm.

Revision of Species Retention Restrictions in the Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA)

- Status quo: Currently, only Nearshore rockfish and a few associated groundfish species may be retained in the open depths within the CCA

- Option: Prohibition on the retention and possession of shelf rockfish while fishing at open depths within the CCA will be eliminated.

Catalina Island 100 fm Depth Closure

- Status quo: The current depth restriction is 60 fm.
- Option: The maximum depth restriction will increase to 100 fm around Catalina Island to provide additional fishing opportunity.

Rockfish Fishery in Waters Deeper than 150 fms

- Status quo: Take and possession of groundfish besides the other flatfish is prohibited seaward of the recreational depth restriction in each management area.
- Option: Establish a recreational fishery for rockfish seaward of the 150 fm RCA line using bottom contact gear or float and long leader fishing gear or traditional fishing gear.

Recreational Analyses Removed from Consideration

Exempting Federally Managed Flatfish from Recreational Groundfish Depth and Season Closures

- Exemption of federally managed flatfish, including petrale sole, from depth and season closures may be not be prudent at this time given the depleted status of petrale sole. This management option may be reconsidered once the petrale sole stock has rebuilt.

Modification Regulations Regarding Filleting Federal Groundfish Species at Sea

- Feedback from the public has identified a number of potentially adverse effects from prohibition of filleting at sea. Deck hands make a considerable portion of their income from filleting the catch of patrons on the way back to port. A prohibition on filleting at sea would result in reduction in much needed income. Party boat operators are required to allow California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS) samplers to collect data onboard their vessels at sea, providing access to fish before being filleted.

The fish reported by the angler as a destined for a purpose that would be included in the "plan to eat" disposition code make up less than 9% of unidentified rockfish. Filleted fish make up an unknown but likely a small fraction of this percentage since anglers are required to leave the entire skin attached allowing identification of filleted fish. Given the limited potential for reduction of unidentified rockfish in the recreational catch, filleting regulations will not be changed in the 2011-2012 season.