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REPORT FROM THE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

March 6 - 12 Fresno, California



SALMON MANAGEMENT

C.9. Adopt 2024 Management Alternatives for Public Review

California

California fisheries offer very limited opportunity in 2024 due to the low forecasts for Klamath River and Sacramento River fall Chinook, and constraints surrounding California Coastal Chinook. Two alternatives for both commercial and sport fisheries offer limited opportunity coastwide, with the third alternative proposed being closed in all areas.

Commercial Season Alternatives

California ocean commercial alternatives include limited opportunity in all subareas in two of the three alternatives. The third alternative is proposed closed. All proposed seasons include harvest limits, along with weekly vessel-based landing and possession limits, and seasons are limited to June. Additional requirements include landing fish in the subarea caught and a 24-hour quick reporting requirement necessary for monitoring catch as the season progresses.

The commercial troll management alternatives are listed here:

<https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2024/03/table-1-2024-commercial-troll-management-measures-for-non-tribal-ocean-salmon-fisheries-council-adopted-march-11-2024.pdf/>

Management Process

The Council has scheduled one public hearing for each coastal state to hear comments on the alternatives. The California hearing is scheduled for Monday, March 25, 7pm, at the Courtyard by Marriot, 175 Railroad Street, Santa Rosa, California (in-person only).

The public will also be able to comment on the alternatives during the April Council meeting.

The Council will consult with scientists, hear public comment, revise preliminary decisions, and choose a final alternative at its meeting April 6 - 11. The Council will forward its final season recommendations to NMFS for its approval and implementation no later than May 16, 2024.

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT

F.1. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report

NMFS provided a report on recently published groundfish rulemakings & workload, as well as electronic monitoring (EM) regulatory program updates.

<https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2024/02/agenda-item-f-1-a-nmfs-report-1-national-marine-fisheries-service-report-on-recently-published-groundfish-rulemaking-and-workload.pdf/>

F.2. Consideration of Additional California Quillback Rockfish Analysis and Rebuilding Analysis

The 2023 rebuilding analysis for California quillback rockfish was adopted

[DRAFT 2023 Rebuilding analysis for quillback rockfish \(Sebastes maliger\) in U.S. waters off the coast of California based on the 2021 stock assessment \(pcouncil.org\)](#)

(with appendix ‘B’ removed). The rebuilding analysis specifies resulting scientific rebuilding parameters (Tmin = 2045, Tmax = 2071, mean generation time = 26 years).

F.3. Initial Stock Assessment Plan and Terms of Reference (TOR)

The Council adopted the following preliminary list of species, assessment type, and anticipated assessment area(s) for 2025 and 2027 groundfish stock assessments.

Table 1 Preliminary List for 2025 Assessments

Species	Assessment Type	Anticipated Assessment Area(s)
sablefish	Benchmark	Coastwide
quillback off CA	Benchmark	South of 42 N. Lat.
rougheye/blackspotted rockfish	Benchmark	Coastwide
yellowtail rockfish	Benchmark (both) or Benchmark (south) & Update (north)	Coastwide, or North of 40 10’ N. Lat. South of 40 10’ N. Lat.
chilipepper rockfish	Benchmark or Data Moderate	Coastwide
widow rockfish	Update	Coastwide
petrale sole	Benchmark	Coastwide
yelloweye rockfish	Benchmark or Update	Coastwide
english sole	Data Moderate	Coastwide
canary rockfish	Catch-Only Update	Coastwide
shortspine thornyhead	Catch-Only Update	Coastwide

Table 2 for Preliminary List of 2027 Assessments

Species	Assessment Type	Anticipated Assessment Area(s)
Pacific spiny dogfish	Benchmark	Coastwide
vermillion/sunset rockfish	TBD	Multiple Areas
petrale sole (if not done in 2025)	Benchmark	Coastwide
yelloweye rockfish (if not done in 2025)	TBD	Coastwide
slope rockfish species (TBD)	TBD	Coastwide

F.6. Groundfish Fixed Gear Marking and Entanglement Risk Reduction Measures

The Council revised the *range of alternatives* (ROA) for temporary line marking and adopted the alternatives below as the *preliminary preferred alternative* (PPA) for fixed gear marking and entanglement risk reduction measures.

Fixed Gear Marking

Buoy Marking: Alternative 1, Suboption b, gear-specific buoy marking with cattle-ear tags (gear specific tags on every buoy, including vessel identification information).

Line Marking: Alternative 1, gear specific line marking with the following specifications:

- Portion of line marked: Vertical line;
- Distance of mark: At least top 20 fm;
- Method of marking: Manufactured line; and,
- Transition period: No transition, manufactured line required upon implementation.

Entanglement Risk Reduction

Surface Gear Requirements: Alternative 1, surface gear required only at one end.

Surface Line Length Restrictions: Alternative 1b, limit the amount of surface line length to 10 fm.

Administrative/Other Items

Alternative 1: Clarify regulations to prohibit escape panel placement on the bottom of the pot, except slinky pots (which do not have a bottom).

Guidance

Request Council staff revise the Purpose and Need Statement to clarify that line marking can contribute to both positive and negative fishery attribution (consider the benefits of entanglements from other fisheries not being attributed to the Fixed Gear Groundfish Fishery).

Request NMFS develop a Best Practices Guide and coordinate with the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) and Enforcement Consultants (EC).

Coordinate with West Coast Dungeness crab fishery managers to identify line and buoy tag colors and shapes that are unique to the Federal Fixed Gear Groundfish Fishery.

F.7. 2025 – 26 Fisheries Analysis Update and Adopt California Quillback Rockfish Harvest Specifications and Rebuilding Parameters

The Council instructed the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to prioritize further analysis of the shortspine thornyhead new management measure ([Agenda Item F.7.a, Supplemental GMT Report 3, March 2024](#)) which would;

- Remove the Management Line at 34° 27' N. Lat.;
- Set a coastwide Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for shortspine thornyhead;
- Set Trawl/Non-Trawl allocations for shortspine thornyhead for 2025 at 64% Trawl, 36% Non-Trawl, using the Amendment 20 component rule for area combinations (requires 2024 value);
- For 2026, revise the Trawl/Non-Trawl shortspine thornyhead allocations to 71% Trawl, 29% Non-Trawl in order to return Trawl to the 2025 value; and,
- Establish Non-Trawl Annual Catch Targets (ACTs) and/or trip limits for shortspine thornyhead north and south of 34°27' N. Lat. [ostensibly] to protect Non-Trawl fishermen south of 34°27' N. Lat.

The Council adopted a range of 2025-2026 harvest specifications for quillback rockfish off of California, as recommended by the GMT in Table 1, as described in [Agenda Item E.7.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1 November 2023](#), with the technical correction to the 2026 specification as noted in [Agenda Item F.7.a, Supplemental SSC Report 1](#). These rebuilding strategies include F=0, which represents no fishing mortality, and the acceptable biological catch (ABC) rule where the ABC is set equal to management risk tolerance (P*) and the scientific uncertainty (sigma) reduction is applied to the overfishing limit. The range of harvest specifications associated with these rebuilding strategies will be included in analysis for the April Council meeting.

Table 3. Quillback rockfish off California rebuilding strategies adopted in March 2024, with the associated range of 2025-2026 harvest specifications for analysis.

	F=0	ABC Rule
2021 assumed removals (mt)		15.58
2022 assumed removals (mt)		18.11
2023 assumed removals (mt)		11.12
2024 assumed removals (mt)		10.62
2025 OFL/ACL	1.52/0	1.52/1.3
2026 OFL/ACL	1.81/0	1.77/1.5
SPR	1	n/a-
T _{target}	2045	2060
T _{max}	2071	2071
Probability of recovery by T _{max}	0.999	0.736

F.8. Inseason Adjustments

The majority of the management measures implemented through the 2023 Inseason Actions occurred between 42° N. Lat. and 36° N. Lat. within the Non-Trawl RCA (as defined by the November 2023 Inseason Action, effective January 1, 2024) based on the limited available spatial data, which indicate that quillback rockfish are rarely encountered south of 36° N. Lat. However, due to comments from numerous members of the public claiming that quillback rockfish are rarely encountered along the central coast of California, specifically in the Monterey Bay area, the GMT further investigated fishery encounters south of Año Nuevo (37° 07' N. Lat.) in fishery data and additional survey datasets that were not available for previous GMT analysis.

pcouncil.org/documents/2024/03/agenda-item-f-8-a-supplemental-gmt-report-1-gmt-report-on-inseason-adjustments-final-action.pdf/

The Council took Inseason Action to move the shoreward boundary of the Non-Trawl RCA between 37° 07' N. Lat. and 36° N. Lat. to 50 fm., which was the shoreward boundary prior to January 1, 2024, and revert modified trip limits for the below species and complexes back to what they were prior to the September and November 2023 Inseason Actions (with potential exceptions for vermilion rockfish and minor shallow/deeper nearshore rockfish). This action would apply to Federal Waters only, with California State Waters remaining closed between 37° 07' N. Lat. and 36° N. Lat. (Except directed commercial groundfish fishing is permitted for nearshore fish species between shore and the 20-fathom boundary line. Nearshore and deeper

nearshore permittees may fish up to the trip limits using legal gear types. Take and possession of other non-nearshore groundfish is not permitted within state waters in the directed commercial groundfish fishery in state waters). Revised trip limits for LEFG and OA sectors would be as follows:

- Minor shelf rockfish:
 - LEFG:
 - 40° 10' - 37° 07' N. lat. : 6,000 lbs. per 2 month period of which no more than 500 lbs. may be vermilion rockfish
 - 37° 07' N. lat. - 34° 27' N. lat.: 8,000 lbs. per 2 month period between of which no more than 500 lbs. may be vermilion rockfish
 - South of 34° 27' N. lat.: 5,000 lbs. per 2 month period of which no more than 3,000 lbs. may be vermilion rockfish
 - OA:
 - 40° 10' - 37° 07' N. lat.: 3,000 lbs. per 2 month period of which no more than 300 lbs. may be vermilion rockfish
 - 37° 07' - 34° 27' N. lat.: 4,000 lbs. per 2 month period of which no more than 300 lbs. may be vermilion rockfish
 - South of 34° 27' N. lat.: 3,000 lbs. per 2 month period of which no more than 900 lbs. may be vermilion rockfish
- Minor deeper nearshore rockfish:
 - LEFG:
 - 40° 10' - 37° 07' N. lat.: 0 lbs. per 2 month period
 - South of 37° 07' N. lat.:
 - Status quo: 0 lbs. per 2 month periods (EC request)
 - Option 1: 2,000 lbs. per 2 month period, of which no more than 75 lbs. may be copper rockfish
 - OA:
 - 40° 10' - 37° 07' N. lat.: 0 lbs. per 2 month period
 - South of 37° 07' N. lat.:
 - Status quo: 0 lbs. per 2 month periods (EC request)
 - Option 1: 2,000 lbs. per 2 month period, of which no more than 75 lbs. may be copper rockfish
- Minor shallow nearshore rockfish:
 - LEFG:
 - 40° 10' - 37° 07' N. lat.: 0 lbs. per 2 month period
 - South of 37° 07' N. lat.:
 - Status quo: 0 lbs. per 2 month period (EC request)
 - Option 1: South of 37° 07' N. lat.: 2,000 lbs. per 2-month period, of which no more than 75 lbs. may be copper rockfish
 - OA:
 - 40° 10' - 37° 07' N. lat.: 0 lbs. per 2 month period
 - South of 37° 07' N. lat.:
 - Status quo: 0 lbs. per 2 month period (EC request)

- Option 1: South of 37° 07' N. lat.: 2,000 lbs. per 2 month period, of which no more than 75 lbs. may be copper rockfish
 - Lingcod:
 - LEFG:
 - 40° 10' and 37° 07' N. lat.: 1,600 lbs. per 2 month period seaward of the Non-Trawl RCA; 0 lbs. per 2 month period inside the Non-Trawl RCA
 - South of 37° 07' N. lat.: 1,600 lbs. per 2 month period
 - OA:
 - 40° 10' - 37° 07' N. lat.: 700 lbs. per month seaward of the Non-Trawl RCA; 0 lbs. per 2 month period inside the Non-Trawl RCA
 - South of 37° 07' N. lat.: 700 lbs. per month
 - Other flatfish:
 - LEFG:
 - 40° 10' N. lat. - 37° 07' N. lat.: 10,000 lbs. per month seaward of the Non-Trawl RCA; 0 lbs. per month inside the Non-Trawl RCA
 - South of 37° 07' N. lat.: 10,000 lbs. per month
 - OA:
 - 40° 10' N. lat. - 37° 07' N. lat.: 5,000 lbs. per month seaward of the Non-Trawl RCA; 0 lbs. per month inside the Non-Trawl RCA
 - South of 37° 07' N. lat.: 5,000 lbs. per month
 - Cabezon:
 - LEFG:
 - Status quo: south of 37° 07' N. lat.: 0 lbs. per 2 months (EC request)
 - Option 1: south of 37° 07' N. lat.: unlimited
 - OA:
 - Status quo: south of 37° 07' N. lat.: 0 lbs. per 2 months (EC request)
 - Option 1: south of 37° 07' N. lat.: unlimited

CROSS FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN (FMP)

E.2. Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: Coral Restoration and Research Plan Range of Alternatives (ROA) and Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA)

The Council adopted a Range of Alternatives for the purposes of coral research and restoration, that includes three areas within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (Ano Nuevo, Ascension Canyon, and Sur Ridge) that would be closed to groundfish commercial bottom contact gears. The alternatives are further described in [Agenda Item E.2, Attachment 1](#), with the modifications described in [Agenda Item E.2.a, Supplemental EC Report 1](#). The Council directed staff to work with NMFS and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to confirm details of the modified areas (e.g., coordinates and depth), conduct any additional analysis, and provide the alternatives for final action at the June 2024 meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

J.3. Future Council Meeting Agenda and Workload Planning

The next meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled for April 5 – 11, 2024, at the Westin Seattle, Washington. The Preliminary Proposed Agenda represents the agenda expectations for the April 2024 Council meeting

pcouncil.org/documents/2024/03/april-2024-council-meeting-agenda-and-meeting-notice.pdf/

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