

longitude coordinates that approximate the 150-fm (274-m) depth contour between 46°16' N. lat. and the U.S./Mexico border. This increase in the size of the non-trawl RCA results in a change from the previously scheduled non-trawl RCA. The previously scheduled non-trawl RCA boundary extended from the shoreline to specific latitude and longitude coordinates approximating the 100-fm (183-m) depth contour between the U.S./Canada border and 46°16' N. lat., from specific latitude and longitude coordinates approximating the 27-fm (49-m) to the 100-fm (183-m) depth contours between the 46°16' N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat., from specific latitude and longitude coordinates approximating the 20-fm (37-m) to the 150-fm (274-m) depth contours between 40°10' N. lat. and 34°27' N. lat., and from the 30-fm (55-m) to the 150-fm (274-m) depth contours between 34°27' N. lat. and the U.S./Mexico border.

The GMT predicted that allowing fishing to continue seaward of the expanded non-trawl RCA for the remainder of the year would result in no additional mortality of canary rockfish or California nearshore rockfish species and only minimal additional mortality of lingcod. No additional mortality of canary rockfish or the California nearshore rockfish species is predicted because these species are typically found at depths shallower than 150-fm (274-m). The GMT predicted that additional mortality of lingcod from the remaining non-trawl fishery would be minimal. According to NMFS shelf and slope survey data from the summers of 1984 to the present, 1 percent of lingcod catches occurred at depths greater than 150-fm (274-m) between the U.S./Canada border and 40°10' N. lat. and 34 percent of lingcod catches occurred at depths greater than 150-fm (274-m) between 40°10' N. lat. and the U.S./Mexico border. Because this adjustment to the non-trawl RCA is occurring from November 21, 2003, through December 31, 2003 the GMT has predicted that impacts on lingcod would be further reduced because lingcod typically move into shallower waters (less than 100-fm (183-m)) to spawn during winter months.

Limited Entry DTS Trawl Limits North of 40°10' N. lat

Throughout 2003, differential trip limits, or trip limits that vary with gear type, have been in place for DTS (Dover sole, thornyheads, sablefish) species in the area between the U.S./Canada border and 40°10' N. lat. Specifically, vessels that use large footrope or midwater trawl gear are offered higher DTS trip limits than those vessels that

use small footrope gear. Because RCA regulations specify that small footrope and midwater trawl gear are the only limited entry trawl gears permitted shoreward of the trawl RCA while all limited entry trawl gears (large and small footrope, midwater) are permitted seaward of the RCA, the intent of the differential trip limits is to encourage fishing seaward of the trawl RCA rather than shoreward of the trawl RCA.

As discussed earlier, this inseason action is expanding the eastern boundary of the trawl RCA to the shoreline. Thus, there is no trawling opportunity shoreward of the trawl RCA from November 21, 2003, through December 31, 2003, and no need for differential trip limits. Therefore, the Pacific Council recommended that the differential DTS trip limits between the U.S./Canada border and 40°10' N. lat. be removed for November and December. The previously scheduled DTS trip limits associated with the use of large footrope or midwater trawl gear (i.e., 7,000 lb (3,175 kg) per 2 months of sablefish, 4,500 lb (2,041 kg) per 2 months of longspine thornyhead, 900 lb (408 kg) per 2 months of shortspine thornyhead, and 30,000 lb (13,608 kg) per 2 months of Dover sole) will be available to vessels using all limited entry trawl gear types. This change is not expected to negatively affect continental shelf overfished species, because those waters are protected by the trawl RCA. Additionally, because this change does not increase overall limits for deepwater species, NMFS does not expect this action to increase the impact of the fishery on continental slope overfished species.

Recreational Groundfish Fisheries Coastwide

Much like the Pacific Coast commercial fisheries, the Pacific Coast recreational fisheries have been restricted in recent years to rebuild overfished groundfish species. Management measures intended to reduce the incidental take of overfished species in recreational fisheries include such things as decreased bag limits, reduced season length, and closed areas. An example of these restrictive management measures was evident this year in the California recreational fishery that occurs between 40°10' N. lat. and the U.S./Mexico border. Historically, this recreational fishery has had year-round fishing opportunities. In an effort to keep this fishery's harvest levels within 2003 OYs for overfished species and within California harvest guidelines for target species, the season length for this fishery was reduced to six months and scheduled to extend

from July through December. Despite this restricted season length, RecFIN catch estimates for California, specifically nearshore rockfish, canary rockfish, and lingcod, during the months of July and August were significantly higher than predicted. As discussed previously, combining RecFIN catch estimates from California with catch estimates from other recreational and commercial fisheries coastwide produces total mortality estimates which exceed harvest targets for some groundfish species and/or species groups. Therefore, the Pacific Council recommended inseason adjustments to recreational groundfish fisheries coastwide. From November 21, 2003, through December 31, 2003, recreational groundfish fisheries off the State of Washington will be prohibited seaward of the Federal/State three mile boundary. Effective November 13, 2003, the state of Washington took action to prohibit the retention of canary rockfish shoreward of the three mile boundary. Because inclement weather curtails recreational groundfish fisheries off Washington during winter months, the additional mortality of either canary rockfish or lingcod associated with this fishery occurring in State waters is predicted to be near zero. Additionally, recreational fishing for lingcod off Washington closed on October 16, 2003. Off the State of Oregon, recreational groundfish fisheries from November 21, 2003, through December 31, 2003, will be prohibited seaward of specific latitude and longitude coordinates approximating the 27-fm (49-m) depth contour and shoreward of the 27-fm (49-m) depth contour retention of canary rockfish and lingcod will be prohibited. Similarly to Washington, effort in Oregon's recreational groundfish fisheries during November and December is low. Because of this low effort, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has predicted that the additional mortality associated with this fishery would be approximately 0.11 mt (110 kg) of canary rockfish and 0.09 mt (90 kg) of lingcod. Off the state of California, all recreational groundfish fisheries, with the exception of the fixed gear sanddab fishery, will be prohibited from November 21, 2003, through December 31, 2003. Because of the small hooks used in this recreational sanddab fishery, California Department of Fish and Game has predicted that the additional mortality of canary rockfish, lingcod, and California nearshore rockfish species would be near zero.