

Management measures for the limited entry fishery are found in section IV. Most cumulative trip limits, size limits, and seasons for the limited entry fishery are set out in Tables 3 and 4 of section IV. However, the limited entry nontrawl sablefish fishery, the midwater trawl fishery for Pacific whiting, and the hook-and-line fishery for black rockfish off Washington are managed separately from the majority of the groundfish species and are not fully addressed in the tables. The management structure for these fisheries has not changed since 2002, except for the level of trip limits for sablefish and Pacific whiting, and is described in paragraphs IV.B.(2)-(4) of section IV. Other provisions for the 2002 fisheries not explicitly addressed above would remain in effect for 2003 and are repeated in section V. of this document.

After hearing proposals and advice from its advisory entities and public testimony at its September 2002 meeting, the Council recommended the following actions for management in 2003.

Limited Entry Trawl

For the limited entry trawl fishery, the Council recommended a suite of gear restrictions, area closures and cumulative trip limits designed to allow fishing with gear in times and areas where incidental catch of overfished or depleted species will be minimized. In 2002, limits for some species groups were more varied than those proposed for 2003 because the 2002 limits were set to encourage (higher limits) or discourage (lower limits) fishing in different depths. Because the Council has recommended depth based closures for 2003, trip limits for those species taken in areas that remain open vary less than in 2002. Many of the more abundant groundfish stocks, such as the suite of flatfish species, are harvested almost exclusively with trawl gear, rather than with hook-and-line gear. Similarly to closed areas designed to protect overfished species taken with trawl gear, the limited entry trawl trip limit regime for more abundant stocks is gear-specific.

Flatfish fisheries are managed with more restrictive trip limits and an expanded closed area during the summer months, when participation is greater and trawl tows for flatfish are more likely to encounter overfished species. Dover sole, sablefish, thornyhead (DTS) complex limits vary only slightly throughout the year because fishing for these species is expected to largely take place on the continental slope, beyond the offshore boundary of the trawl RCAs. North of 40°10' N. lat., the trawl RCA is primarily

intended to protect canary and darkblotched rockfish; south of 40°10' N. lat., the trawl RCA is primarily intended to protect bocaccio.

As in 2002, trawl-caught lingcod retention would be permitted throughout the year, with higher limits in the summer months. Lingcod caught incidentally during winter trawl fisheries would otherwise be discarded and thereby increase the overall lingcod discard level in the trawl fisheries. The lingcod landings limits of 800 lb (363 kg) per 2-month period in the winter months and 1,000 lb (454 kg) per 2-month period in the summer months are not high enough to give trawlers an incentive to target lingcod. Total lingcod catch is expected to be well under the lingcod OY due to fishery restrictions intended to protect other overfished species.

For 2003, the Council recommended continuing the use of differential trip limits for limited entry trawlers operating with different trawl gear configurations: bottom trawl with footropes greater than 8 inches (20.5 cm) in diameter (large footrope); bottom trawl with footropes smaller than 8 inches (20.5 cm) in diameter (small footrope); and midwater or pelagic trawl. Trawling with footropes that have roller gear or other large gear designed to bounce over tough rock piles tends to allow those vessels greater access to rocky areas where several of the overfished species congregate. Therefore, landings of shelf rockfish are prohibited if large footrope trawls (such as roller gear) are used (or are on board the vessel); small amounts of shelf rockfish bycatch may be landed if small footrope trawls are used; and, targeting more abundant shelf rockfish stocks is encouraged only if midwater trawls are used. Midwater trawl gear generally has very low bycatch of overfished species because most of those species aggregate on or near the ocean bottom, where midwater trawl gear does not operate. To further ensure that large footrope trawl gear is not used in nearshore and continental shelf areas, bottom trawling with large footrope gear is prohibited shoreward of the RCAs. Within the RCAs, bottom trawling will be prohibited for all groundfish and midwater trawling will be permitted only for Pacific whiting, widow rockfish and yellowtail rockfish north of 40°10' N. lat. and only for whiting and widow rockfish south of 40°10' N. lat. If a vessel fishes in an RCA, it may not participate in any fishing on that same trip that is inconsistent with the restrictions that apply within the RCA. For example, if a vessel participates in the shrimp fishery within the RCA, the vessel

cannot on the same trip participate in the DTS fishery outside the RCA. Additionally, only one trawl gear type will be permitted on board per fishing trip. Cowcod prohibitions and CCAs apply to limited entry trawl vessels, although there are few limited entry trawl vessels operating south of Point Conception in CCA waters.

Large footrope trawls may still be used for deepwater fisheries where fewer overfished species are encountered. These fisheries primarily take Dover and rex soles, thornyheads, sablefish, and deepwater rockfish. Higher limits of yellowtail and widow rockfish are available when those species are taken with midwater trawl gear during the primary whiting season. Yellowtail rockfish taken with small footrope gear is restricted to 1,000 lb (454 kg) per month unless it is taken with flatfish, or taken during November-December. These combined yellowtail rockfish management measures are intended to allow yellowtail rockfish retention in fisheries, times and areas where incidental harvest of overfished species is lower.

Limited Entry Fixed Gear

Similar to the limited entry trawl fisheries, trip limit opportunities and area closures in the limited entry fixed gear fisheries are arranged to minimize opportunities for intercepting overfished species. As discussed earlier, limited entry fixed gear fisheries will be closed in times when and areas where they are expected to intercept overfished species.

North of 40°10' N. lat., management measures to protect yelloweye rockfish constrain the limited entry fixed gear fishery by prohibiting those vessels from operating in an RCA of 27–100 fm (49–183 m) depths. Washington State waters (shore to 3 nm) are closed to commercial groundfish fishing and the 27 fm (49 m) contour is entirely within State waters, which means that limited entry fixed gear vessels operating off Washington will not have nearshore fishing opportunities. South of the Washington/Oregon border at 46°16' N. lat. and north of 40°10' N. lat., the primary limited entry fixed gear fishing opportunity shoreward of the RCA will be for nearshore rockfish. Similar to 2002, fisheries for minor nearshore rockfish north of 40°10' N. lat. are managed with sublimits for species other than black and blue rockfish, to encourage targeting on these more abundant nearshore rockfish species.

South of 40°10' N. lat., the limited entry fixed gear RCA is in 20–150 fm (37–274 m) depths to protect bocaccio and other overfished rockfish. In 2001