

Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan - (Briefing)

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Summary

Meeting dates: June 13, 2014

Agenda item: Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan -- (Briefing)

Presenter(s): Dr. Dayv Lowry, Senior Research Scientist
Dr. Theresa Tsou, Senior Research Scientist

Background summary:

In 2009 and 2010 the Department convened a panel of stakeholders and staff to develop the Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan, partially in response to the pending ESA-listing of three rockfish species. The plan was meant to guide development of a comprehensive strategy to ensure the long-term stability of populations of all rockfish species in Puget Sound, ultimately resulting in sustainable fisheries. The plan included goals and actions incorporating biological research, fishery and habitat management, and education and public outreach.

Since its inception various actions included in the plan have been undertaken, including the establishment of a 120' depth rule for recreational bottomfishing, closure of nearly all commercial fisheries that target rockfish or have the potential to take them as bycatch, execution of studies to evaluate incidental mortality as a result of fishery bycatch, initiation of visual-based, non-consumptive abundance survey methods, and participation in Federal and multi-entity working groups and advisory panels focused on rockfish recovery.

Though progress has been made in several areas, an implementation schedule is under development to facilitate prioritization and completion of all portions of the plan given current funding and staffing levels, and anticipating future needs. The briefing provided here will include a summary of major implementation actions taken to date, as well as outline planned activities to be initiated in coming years.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

N/A

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

The plan was developed with input from an advisory group consisting of conservationists, academics, recreational fishers, scuba divers, and aquarists, in addition to substantial participation from diverse agency staff. Meetings were held to develop draft concepts and documents, which were further reviewed and revised by e-mail. The plan represents the collective opinion of staff and the advisory board, but some aspects of the plan were supported most vocally by a minority of participants. Implementation of some plan components may require substantial research and outreach efforts to ensure the best available science is being used and the public trusts the conclusions being drawn based upon this science.

Action requested:

N/A

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A.

Communications Plan:

Several reports and peer-reviewed publications will be written over the next several months that detail the findings of recent abundance and distribution surveys, survey method comparisons, and novel analyses of historic data. The results of these studies will be shared with Federal and multi-entity working groups focused on rockfish research, governmental co-managers, and the public (e.g., scuba diving clubs, recreational angler associations, and the general public via the Department's webpage). In April of 2012 a presentation was given at the annual meeting of the Western Division of the American Fisheries Society on the mitigation aspects of the Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan. This presentation was well received by fishery managers who generally focus on freshwater systems and has generated several productive exchanges with researchers in several Western states.

Form revised 12/5/12

Commission Request to Department

"Blue Sheet"

Date of Request: March 1, 2013

Title of Request: Briefing on Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan

Commissioner: Jennings & Schmitten

Priority Level (put one check in each row):

Importance: High Medium Low

Urgency: High Medium Low

Request Due Date: When convenient – next 4 months

Knowledge or Action Being Requested (narrative). Describe what you want to know. Be specific.

Briefing, background, operational challenges, implementation efforts, relationship to Puget Sound Groundfish Management Plan.

Output Requested (e.g., telephone call, memo, material from files, new report, presentation, other):

Presentation to full commission.

For Commission Executive Assistant Use	
Date Assigned: <u>3/5/13</u> [At Debrief]	Assigned To: <u>Fish</u> [Program]
revised 8/07/12 -eg	