

Recreational Red Abalone Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Project Team

Working Meeting #4: Revised Management Strategy & Continued Discussion on *De Minimis* Fishery

Tuesday, September 19, 2019

Summary of Key Themes and Discussion Highlights

The fourth in a series of Project Team meetings for the recreational red abalone fishery management plan (FMP) development process was held on September 19, 2019 (agenda [here](#)). Hosted by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), in partnership with the Ocean Protection Council (OPC), California Fish and Game Commission (Commission), Tribes and Tribal communities and the recreational fishing community, the meeting provided an opportunity for the Project Team to continue informing the management strategies integration process at the recommendation of the peer review panel and Commission, and in accordance with their charter ([here](#)).

The goals of the meeting were to share updates on work completed since the third Project Team meeting (August 27; Key Themes Summary [here](#)), review a revised draft management strategy that integrated Project Team feedback shared during the August 27 Project Team meeting, and continue to discuss priorities for the design of a *de minimis* fishery, using the Administrative Team strawman proposals as a foundation for discussion. There were approximately 45 participants on the webinar.

This document is intended to provide an overview of the discussion topics, key questions, and identified next steps that emerged from the meeting discussion. The summary is intended to capture high-level details and key themes, rather than provide a transcript of the discussion.

Key references and materials are available on page 5 of this document; additionally, an overview on the recreational red abalone FMP process for the North Coast is provided for additional reference ([here](#)).

Project Team, Agenda Highlights

Project Team Updates Since August 27 (*Dr. Alexis Jackson, TNC & Administrative Team Chair - presentation [here](#)*)

Following the August 27 Project Team meeting, the Administrative Team facilitated an in-person working meeting for the modelers to discuss feedback from the Project Team and decide on next steps to advance work. In an effort to ensure all members of the Project Team are able to understand core components of the draft management strategy and the development process, both of which are highly technical in nature, the Administrative Team updated the glossary of key terms and the high-level summary of the draft strategy to highlight new language and key changes. The Administrative Team, committed to considering new ideas from the Project Team regarding the design of a *de minimis* fishery, reviewed and responded to all proposals and comment letters received as of September 16, 2019. Lastly, the Administrative Team furthered conversations with the Tribal community to learn how best to incorporate data and information into the management strategy integration process.

Refining the Draft Management Strategy (*Dr. William Harford, lead modeler- presentation [here](#)*)

The Project Team was presented with a revised draft management strategy (high-level summary [here](#) and full technical report [here](#)) and supporting rationale for updates, including how Project Team feedback was

considered and integrated, and where and why it was not integrated in some cases. Dr. Harford provided a high-level overview of the key components of the draft strategy, including the development of an exceptional circumstances provision and proposal for two fishing zones (1 = Marin, Sonoma Counties; 2 = Mendocino, Del Norte, Humboldt counties). The Project Team focused their discussion on fishing zones.

Discussing the *De Minimis* Fishery (Dr. Sonke Mastrup, CDFW- presentation [here](#))

Dr. Mastrup summarized three different approaches to a *de minimis* fishery, which were initially discussed with the Project Team during the July 18 webinar. The Project Team was asked to help define management measures and allocation options during the discussion.

Key Themes & Discussion Highlights

While there was general support for the revised draft management strategy, particularly the exceptional circumstances provision (Part A) and indicator-based decision tree in the harvest control rule (HCR; Part B), the Project Team suggested further discussion on the number of management zones being considered.

- The Project Team approved of the two indicators in the HCR: length-based spawning potential ratio and red abalone density. No concerns were expressed that body condition and/or gonad index were removed from the HCR.
- The Project Team supported the exceptional circumstances provision, and collectively acknowledged that the criteria to designate and declare an exceptional circumstance, as well as the protocol for involving the Commission/CDFW for decision-making, still needs to be developed.
 - Dissolved oxygen was mentioned as another data stream to monitor in this provision to understand the potential for kelp recovery.
 - The developing warm water blob (and future warm water anomalies) was identified as an event that should be evaluated as part of this provision.
- During the August 27 Project Team meeting, and continuing into this meeting, the Project Team requested that alternative proposals (beyond two zones) be considered for fishing zones. Options for included:
 - Three zones - 1) Marin and Sonoma counties, 2) Mendocino county, and 3) Humboldt and Del Norte counties.
 - Zone 3 (Humboldt and Del Norte) would not be managed according to the two-part management strategy. Instead, a total allowable catch (TAC) could be determined using historical catch levels (as done in Oregon) or set to be a small percentage of the natural mortality rate (e.g., 5%). As data in this zone is collected over time, Humboldt/Del Norte could be managed in accordance with the two-part management strategy, similar to Zones 1 and 2
 - Alternatively, a third zone could be incorporated into the two-part management strategy. Part A would still occur (evaluating exceptional circumstances), and if no concerns triggered then a bio-fishery could occur at a TAC level aligned with CDFW's current levels of biological sampling. This would satisfy the recommendation for triggers (through Part A), be responsive to stakeholder interest in more than two zones, and help to fill data/information gaps over time.
 - Four zones - 1) Marin and Southern Sonoma counties, 2) Northern Sonoma county, 3) Southern Mendocino county (south of Cabrillo Lighthouse in Caspar), and 4) Northern Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties (north of Cabrillo Lighthouse in Caspar to Oregon border).
 - Alternative suggestions for boundaries (see 'Next Steps') were welcomed from Project Team members.

- There was broad interest in site-specific management rather than at the zone level to increase harvest opportunities even at very small catch levels.
- Enforcement stated that the challenge and effort of enforcing two, three, or four zones, would be similar (i.e., enforcement challenges do not increase with number of zones).
- Regardless of the final fishing zones delineations, the management strategy should be adaptive in order to respond to changes in data sampling programs and stakeholder priorities over time.

There was ongoing discussion about the interpretation of the recommendation from the Fish and Game Commission about whether a fishing zone must be managed with the use of triggers.

- The modelers and Administrative Team emphasized that their charge is to develop a management strategy that can be evaluated using MSE to ensure the long term recovery and sustainability of the resource. This requires a management strategy that can be supported by existing sampling programs and available data, based on their interpretation/understanding of the Commission's recommendation on the use of trigger-based management where possible, and if not, to provide supporting rationale and options. (see below for discussion of Commission directive). Decisions regarding fishing zones must reflect the technical capabilities of management strategy evaluation (MSE) and the goals set by the Commission for management strategy integration.
 - The modelers highlighted that MSE is not sensitive enough to model zones where low and/or no data is available (i.e., in a Humboldt/Del Norte counties zone).
 - Site-specific management is challenging because of limited sampling resources. Monitoring at many sites means collecting less data per site over the entire North Coast, resulting in a less comprehensive understanding of the status of the red abalone resource in Northern California.
 - There was some confusion as to whether triggers for opening/closing a *de minimis* fishery are a recommendation or requirement for the management strategy. The Administrative Team shared that the Commission highlighted the use of trigger-based management in their recommendation, but that if this was not possible, the Project Team will have supporting rationale if the Project Team decided to deviate from the recommended approach.

With regard to how TAC would be allocated among users, the majority of the Project Team favored the "preference points" approach (relative to "random draw" and "pay to play", see [here](#)), whereby those who have waited the longest get preference (similar to big game draw). Tribes and Tribal communities expressed that they did not support any of the allocation schemes as subsistence harvest is not comparable to recreational harvest by fishermen.

- There was agreement that the allocation scheme should provide opportunities for all stakeholders, optimize economic support to local communities, and support a cost-effective and reliable data collection that involves stakeholders. It should also be relatively simple.
- Tribes and Tribal communities will seek to work with the Commission and Legislature to understand how subsistence harvest can be supported in the FMP, ideally outside of an allocation scheme as subsistence take fundamentally differs from recreational take.
- There was a suggestion to open/close the *de minimis* fishery at the fishing zone level, but have total allowable catch (TAC) determined at report cards sites. There is concern that some sites will see immense harvesting pressure while others will not be fished as heavily. This may complicate and challenge the understanding of recovery at the zone level.
 - Recognizing this situation may arise, suggestions were made for a "pay to play" allocation approach where fishermen that harvest from less popular/reduced-pressure fishing sites would pay more, and a "lottery" allocation approach would be used where a limited number of fishermen are allowed to fish outside of the ten index sites in the Abalone Recovery and Management Plan ([here](#), Figure 1 on page 4).

- The modelers and Administrative Team emphasized that site-specific opening/closing requires site-specific sampling, which raises the same issue around resource limitations as the discussion about fishing zones. The management strategy must be supported by existing sampling programs and data streams.
 - Bio-fisheries would be the exception to the rule and would be site-, and even date-, specific as CDFW staff would need to be present to collect data.
- Reasons for supporting the “preference points” system included: more democratic, provides the greatest number of stakeholders with fishing opportunity, has proven to be successful for hunters, and will likely decrease the amount of time before stakeholders can harvest again under the new FMP.

The Project Team began share ideas for specific management measures related to size limit, season timing, and daily and individual take limits.

- Size limit: There was an agreement to retain the proposed 7 inch size limit, which safeguards productivity and lowers the risk of death by injury due to harvesters removing and replacing undersized red abalone.
- Season timing: There was the suggestion to consider a year-round fishing season as well as a July-September and July-October fishing season. A general statement was made that months with calm weather would be favored. It was also suggested that perhaps a season was not needed if the TAC is very small.
 - In addition to season timing, it was suggested that fishing should be allowed from 8am until sunset.
- Daily and individual take limits: With the understanding that MSE can inform whether TAC that is sustainable, the Project Team was unified in their desire to provide increased fishing opportunities, even if it requires a lower daily/individual take limit. The more persons who could harvest, the better.
 - The Project Team acknowledged however that if the cost and effort (i.e., time, finances, travel, logistics) of realizing a fishing opportunity outweighed the benefits because the daily/individual take is too small, the idea of distributing opportunity among the most people would be challenged.

Next Steps

- The modelers will start by conducting MSE for the proposed two fishing zones. Upon reviewing proposals for other fishing zone configurations, the modelers will assess current availability of data and run one additional zone alternative through the MSE. This is due to the fact that it is very computationally intensive to model multiple zone configurations. Proposals involving zones with very low TACs (like those indicated by the data-limited fishery that has been discussed) will not require MSE to evaluate and will continue to be discussed and evaluated by the Administrative and Project Team outside of the framework of MSE.
 - The Project Team is invited to submit county or landmark-based boundaries for alternative fishing zone configurations by October 4, 2019 for consideration by the modelers.
- The Project Team will continue to submit public comments and/or proposals to the Administrative Team.
 - The Administrative Team will continue to review and respond to these proposals/comments.
- The Administrative Team will update the *de minimis* strawman proposals to reflect the management measures and allocation ideas and priorities shared by the Project Team and identify elements requiring further discussion.
- The Administrative Team will update the next steps for modelers document.
- The Administrative Team will continue to improve engagement with Tribes and Tribal communities, through the Tribal Administrative Team representative, to increase participation in the Project Team

meetings and understand how to better consider Tribal knowledge throughout this collaborative process.

- Strategic Earth will draft a Key Themes Summary for the meeting that will be posted on the OPC's webpage ([here](#)). Strategic Earth will circulate meeting support materials, address Project Team requests, and support Project Team coordination between meetings. Strategic Earth will also work with the Administrative Team to keep the Project Team informed of project updates and meeting details.

Key References and Materials

Materials referenced during the meeting are available online at

<http://www.opc.ca.gov/2019/05/red-abalone-management-strategies-integration/> including:

- [September 19, 2019 Project Team Meeting Agenda](#) (webinar)
- [Updated, High-level Summary of Revised Draft Management Strategy](#)
- [Technical Report on Revised Draft Management Strategy](#) (updated September 17, 2019)
- [Updated, Project Team work plan](#)
- [Updated, Glossary of Key Terms](#)
- [Updated, Proposed Next Steps for Modelers](#)
- [Data Stream Comparison Table](#) (August 2019 version)
- De minimis fishery ideas and concepts received from the public (listed under "Project Team Proposals" on the OPC webpage)

PowerPoint Presentations and Webinar Recording:

- [Project Team Updates Since August 27, 2019](#)
- [Refining the Draft Management Strategy](#)
- [Discussing the De Minimis Fishery](#)
- [Webinar Recording](#)

Additional reference materials that provide background information on the management strategy integration process and foundational information are also available, including:

- [Project Team charter](#)
- [Administrative Team charter](#)
- [California Ocean Science Trust Recreational Red Abalone Fishery Peer Review webpage](#)
- [Final Report of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel Scientific Peer Review of Proposed Recreational Red Abalone Management Strategies](#)
- [Recommendations from December 2018 Fish and Game Commission meeting](#)
- [Abalone Recovery and Management Plan](#)

For more information about the recreational red abalone Project Team, please visit <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2019/05/red-abalone-management-strategies-integration> or contact hello@strategiearth.com. For more information on the red abalone FMP, please visit <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Red-Abalone-FMP>.