

“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting:	December 2-4, 2010, Commission Meeting
Agenda item #20:	Alternatives to Existing Bottomfish Management Measures in Catch Area 4 – Briefing/Public Hearing
Staff Contact:	Heather Reed, Director’s Office Coastal Marine Resources Policy Coordinator
Presenter(s):	Craig Burley, Fish Program Fish Management Division Manager Heather Reed, Director’s Office Coastal Marine Resources Policy Coordinator

Background:

During the 2010-12 biennial sportfishing rule-making cycle, the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) adopted several rule changes affecting recreational bottomfishing in Marine Area 4, east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line to the Sekiu River, an area also referred to as Marine Area 4B. The rule changes were implemented to protect bottomfish resources and included restricting bottomfish fishing to the area shallower than 120 feet (20 fathoms), prohibiting the retention of all rockfish except black and blue rockfish and reducing the rockfish daily bag limit from 10 to six.

During the 2010-12 sportfishing rule cycle, the Commission also considered a proposal for a large area closure for bottomfish and halibut fishing in a portion of Marine Area 4B. The Commission heard a significant amount of public testimony regarding these proposals and in response directed Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) staff members to seek additional public input on bottomfish management in this area. To accomplish this task, an ad hoc focus group was formed to provide advice and input to the Department throughout the process. Staff members worked with the focus group to develop a range of alternatives that would be presented to the public at meetings throughout the region. Management objectives, based on existing Washington Administrative Codes (WACs), Revised Codes of Washington (RCWs), Department policies and Puget Sound management plans, were used as guiding principles during the development of the alternatives. The Department held three public meetings to present the information and gather feedback on the alternatives. Department staff members will brief the Commission on a summary of the public input we received and the final set of management alternative resulting from this process.

Policy issues:

Several management measures were implemented in 2010 to protect bottomfish resources in Marine Area 4B. The Commission is considering whether additional management measures are necessary to protect bottomfish resources and provide non-consumptive opportunities in this area.

Public involvement process and outcome:

The Department formed an ad hoc focus group of interested citizens to work with staff members during the process of developing alternatives for management in Marine Area 4B. Nominations for the focus group were solicited by a direct mailing and through an agency news release; the final group selected represented a diverse range of interests in bottomfish resources in Marine Area 4B. Department staff members did not strive to develop alternatives that represented a consensus point of view of the focus group but rather attempted to develop the range of alternative such that they reflected the diversity of interests and ideas brought forth by all members of the group. Three public meetings (Seattle, Port Angeles, and Olympia) were held to solicit input on the alternatives.

In addition, information on alternatives was posted to the agency web page to allow the public to review the information prior to the meetings and to encourage additional input from those that would not be able to attend one of the meetings. Following the public meetings staff met again with the focus group to review the comments and in response made some revisions to the alternatives and provided additional information on the agency webpage. The majority of comments support the status quo alternative although comments supporting more conservative management measures in alternatives two and three were also heard. The staff briefing includes a summary of the public comments received to date. Written public comment closes December 4, 2010.

Action requested:

No action is required; this is the rule briefing and public hearing opportunity. The Commission will consider final adoption of the rule proposals at its February 2011 meeting.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission Action:

N/A

Communications Plan:

N/A

Form updated 04/26/2010 - sdy