

Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Best Use Cooperative

Final Report

December 15, 2011

Introduction:

In Section 802 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-199), Congress required the Secretary of Commerce in consultation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) to establish a Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Pilot Program (RPP). The Council adopted the Program on June 6, 2005, and the Program was implemented by Final Rule on November 20, 2006.

Under the Rockfish Pilot Program, there are two options for the eligible trawl catcher/processors (CP): opt-out of the RPP or opt-in. If a CP opts-in to the program, the vessel can either participate in a cooperative or in a limited access fishery.

In the limited access fishery, the CPs fish on an amount of the three primary rockfish species [Pacific Ocean Perch (POP), Northern rockfish, Pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR)] that is derived from the catch history of those vessels not participating in cooperatives and a pro-rata share of the history of those CPs which opted out of the program. Secondary species in the limited access pool are managed on bycatch allowances.

For the cooperative, NMFS issues quota shares for the three primary rockfish species, and for four secondary species: Sablefish, Shortraker rockfish, Rougheyeye rockfish and Thornyhead rockfish. Each cooperative also receives a quota share of Halibut PSC mortality. The quota shares are then distributed among the participating vessels. All quota share species are managed as hard caps with 100% mandatory retention.

For the first three years of the RPP, the U.S. Intrepid chose to participate in the limited access fishery, rather than take the risk of exceeding hard cap allocations of secondary species – the amounts of which were much lower than the vessels’ harvests (and retention) of those species in prior years. In anticipation of the new Rockfish Program where it was likely that CPs would no longer have the choice of a limited access fishery, FFI formed a cooperative for the 2010 CGOA rockfish fishery. In 2011, the *American No. 1* declined to participate in a coop, enjoying limited access’ soft cap management of bycatch species, for a final year. The *U.S. Intrepid* was joined by the *Vaerdal* in the Coop this year instead.

Membership of the Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Best Use Cooperative:

Vessel Owner	Vessel Name	LLP	ADF&G No.
U.S. Fishing, LLC	U.S. Intrepid	2800	54392
Alaska Vaerdal, LLC	Vaerdal	2123	01119

Monitoring the Fishing Plan and Catch:

When NMFS established the Coop quota shares, the Captains were assigned their individual quota shares for each of the three primary rockfish species, the four secondary species, and the halibut PSC. The Captains were also informed of their sideboard allowances for the month of July, in keeping with the sideboard rules of the RPP.

NMFS was notified in advance of intent to fish in the RPP, in order for NMFS to have the opportunity to brief the observers. Each vessel is mandated to have two observers on board for the RPP, or while the vessel has RPP fish on board.

Each vessel has a catch monitoring program on board called “eHarvest”. Observer files are downloaded to the eHarvest program after the observers sample the hauls. This program uses the same extrapolation methodology as the NMFS AK Region for determining official catch. In this way, the vessels have real time QS catch data on board.

When the observers send their files to NMFS, their data is checked at the Observer Program and then is extrapolated at the Region. It then is available to the NMFS data managers, and also to third party data managers such as the Alaska Seafood Cooperative and Seastate. Although the official NMFS data takes several days to process, and the eHarvest program information is available immediately, the coop bases its official total catch on the NMFS Account Balance.

The vessel Captains update the home offices daily with eHarvest catch data. The offices compare the catch and QS balances with Seastate and with the NMFS region’s Account Balance for the coop. If any of these databases do not match, then tow by tow comparisons are made between the eHarvest and the Seastate data (Seastate data is obtained directly from NMFS and we can look at it on the individual tow level). We may also confer with NMFS AK Region on haul information if discrepancies cannot be solved by looking into the Seastate data. Since the inception of the RPP, NMFS In-Season managers have been extremely helpful to industry from a regulatory and data perspective. Alaska Seafood Cooperative managers are also available for additional assistance in verifying or corroborating numbers if requested.

The vessel Captains communicate directly with one another on the grounds, with the home offices, and have the ability to communicate directly with the third party data managers if necessary. The managers of the *Vaerdal* and *U.S. Intrepid* maintained contact throughout the fishery.

Retained and Discarded QS:

Due to 100% mandatory retention of the three primary rockfish and four secondary species under the program, there are no discards.

Sideboards:

The RPP allows that vessels which have history in other Gulf fisheries in the month of July can fish up to a sideboard level equivalent to their historic average catch in those fisheries. The coop fish plan details the timing of the prosecution of the sideboard fisheries, in addition to timing of the harvest of the CGOA rockfish QS. The *U.S. Intrepid* fished its sideboard West Yakutat rockfish starting on July 1st, prior to fishing its CGOA QS. The *Vaerdal* fished its sideboard fisheries also starting July 1.

Transfers/Overages/Underages:

The last page shows the coop allocation, transfers in and out of the cooperative, and vessel harvests. The coop allocation and transfer table is copied directly from the NMFS Coop Account Balance webpage. The individual vessel harvests are provided by Seastate. There were a total of eleven transfers of quota into and out of the cooperative. The PSR account balance changed post fishing, and the resulting number shows an overage of 0.028 mt (61 lbs). The original balance at end of fishing showed a positive of 0.065 (143 lbs).

Table of allocations, transfers, harvests and sideboards:

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Display Accounts for Year

Species Group	Initial Quota	Trans. In	Trans. Out	Total Quota	Total Catch	Remain. Quota	% Taken	US Intrepid	Vaerdal
CGOA Northern Rockfish	136.279	136.046	0	272.325	271.235	1.090	100	271.235	
CGOA PSR	441.641	211.278	0	652.919	652.947	-0.028	100	652.947	
CGOA POP	441.695	128.874	73.732	496.837	496.837	0.000	100	496.837	
CGOA Rougheye	80.794	194.605	0	275.399	227.972	47.427	83	227.972	
CGOA Sablefish	32.227	13.511	3.722	42.016	42.016	0.000	100	42.016	
CGOA Shortraker	15.431	14.668	0	30.099	14.714	15.385	49	14.714	
CGOA Thornyhead	23.105	46.347	0	69.452	28.418	41.034	41	28.418	
CGOA Halibut	17.139	0	0	17.139	4.719	12.420	28	4.719	
WGOA POP	5.01	0	0	5.010	1.835	3.175	37		1.834
WGOA Northern Rockfish	77.242	0	0	77.242	7.747	69.495	10		7.747
WGOA PSR	16.761	0	0	16.761	1.449	15.312	9		1.449
GOA W. Yak. PSR	44.259	0	0	44.259	29.857	14.402	67	29.857	
GOA W. Yak. POP	209.7	0	0	209.700	188.087	21.613	90	188.087	
GOA Halibut DW Complex	22.803	0	0	22.803	17.834	4.969	78	1.702	16.132
GOA Halibut SW Complex	5.415	0	0	5.415	0	5.415	0		

* end of fishing CGOA PSR account showed 652.854