

RE: Inseason Adjustments – Final Action

In-Season Public Comment for the Sportfishing Association of California (SAC) Voluntary avoidance of copper rockfish by the SAC Fleet and others, and outreach efforts by CCA-Cal, Coastside Fishing Club and more has had profound effects, vastly reducing copper rockfish mortality in 2022. The Groundfish Sub-Panel statement under this item points to the scale of this reduction – just 63.6mt of 137.4 projected for the season. In this effort, not only were copper rockfish avoided, but anglers were encouraged to release these fish, a catch which otherwise tends to be one of the more desirable. In Santa Barbara, partyboat clients only retained those fish destined to become a part of the CDFW, SAC, NMFS data collection in preparation for the ongoing copper full assessment. Out of Dana Wharf Sportfishing anglers were rewarded for releasing coppers. They were presented a catch and release hat and a 40% discount on their next outing. Anglers were encouraged to use descending devices in releasing these and other rockfish. The SAC appreciates GMT staff in their development and application of depth-based mortality tables for rockfish. In California an estimated 19,803 coppers were released. Of those, survivorship was estimated to be 10,579 fish or 53%. The fleet will continue with these avoidance and release efforts this season. The Council and National Marine Fisheries' action expanding recreational access into deeper waters will greatly assist in our continuing efforts to minimize copper rockfish mortality. It provides greater opportunity to target healthy rockfish stocks outside of depths where coppers are most abundant. In this effort the SAC fleet and recreational anglers hope to maintain copper catches below their TAC, and ultimately recover some fraction of the time they are currently denied having rockfish onboard while fishing inshore waters.