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By-Catch Requirements in Mixed Fisheries

After many years, some groundfish stocks that have been under long-term moratoria are showing positive signs of recovery. These stocks include 3LNO Am. Plaice, 3LN redfish, and 3M cod.

It is important that Fisheries Commission and Contracting Parties continue to promote positive growth in these stocks by maintaining by-catch at the lowest possible levels while also ensuring that directed fisheries for other stocks/species can continue in a sustainable and viable manner.

It is also important that Fisheries Commission and Contracting Parties find the balance between directed fisheries and by-catch of moratoria species, particularly in historically mixed fisheries.

For example, in the mixed yellowtail/Am. plaice fishery in Divisions 3LNO, the two species have recovered from low levels in the 1990s at differing rates. Yellowtail is fully recovered and above B_{msy} while Am. plaice is still recovering and moving toward B_{lim} .

Am. plaice is increasingly present on traditional yellowtail grounds and unavoidable. The level of Am. plaice by-catch taken by Canada is currently at the lowest possible level as reflected by requirements to move to avoid Am. plaice, however, these avoidance efforts undermine economic efficiency of the yellowtail fishery and may actually result in higher catch of other moratoria species.

Considerations

Promote viable and sustainable fisheries for quota species while keeping by-catch of moratoria species at the lowest possible and truly unavoidable levels through the application of a precautionary and eco-system-based approach to legitimate, historical, and proven mixed fisheries where the by-catch species is on a sustained upward trajectory towards or beyond B_{lim} by applying each of the following:

1. By-catch of moratoria species must be managed in a manner that would not prevent or undermine its recovery or cause an unreasonable delay in reaching B_{lim} for any moratoria stock.
2. By-catch of moratoria species should not unduly restrict the directed fishery for other stocks where intermixing is known to occur.
3. Vessels must employ avoidance techniques, selection devices, and/or other technology, as practical.

Fisheries Commission decisions on alternate by-catch management strategies will be made on a case-by-case basis.