FINAL

Environmental Impact Statement
for the
Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan

Including Preferred Range of Actions





LEAD AGENCY

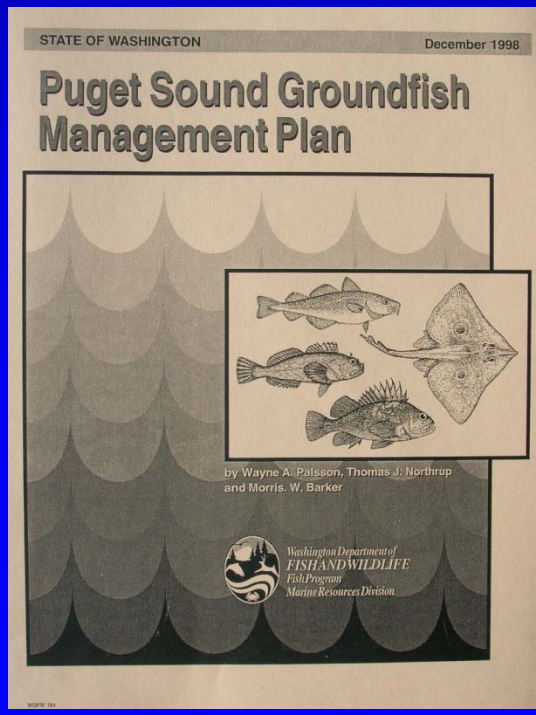
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Fish Program
Olympia, WA

MARCH 2011

www.wdfw.wa.gov

Plan Development

- Puget Sound Groundfish Management Plan
- Biology and Assessment a source document
- EIS developed under the State Environmental Protection Act
- Consultation with the Treaty Tribes
- Extensive Public Process



Geographical Coverage of Plan Includes Neah Bay

Public Adoption Process

- SEPA scoping public notice — June 18, 2008
- Draft Plan/EIS released — October 19, 2009
- 1st Public comment period — Oct 19-Jan. 4, 2010
  - 7 workshops
  - Extended
- Ad Hoc Rockfish Work Group — Dec ‘09-June ‘10
- Amended DEIS — April 2010
- 2nd Public Comment Period/WS — April/May 2010
- Final plan adopted — March 2010

Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan Goal:

The goal of the PSRCP is to restore and protect our natural heritage of Puget Sound rockfish populations. Increases in the abundance, distribution, diversity and productivity of rockfish will help restore the Puget Sound ecosystem, provide opportunities to view rockfish in the marine environment and, when appropriate, provide sustainable fishing opportunities.

Plan Policy Areas

Natural Production

Habitat

Fishery Management

Ecosystem

Monitoring, Evaluation & Adaptive Management

Research

Outreach, Education, & Ecotourism

Enhancement (Artificial Reef and Hatchery Production)

All Species vs. Indicator Species

Assemblage	Indicator	Other Spp.	Potential Stocks
Nearshore Sedentary	Copper, Quillback	Brown, Tiger, Vermilion	North, South
Pelagic	Black, Puget Sound	Blue, Yellowtail	Single Puget Sound
Deepwater	Yelloweye, Canary, Bocaccio		DPS, west of Port Angeles
	Greenstriped	Redstripe	North and South
		Splitnose, shortspine, thornyhead, rougheye, redbanded, darkblotched, POP, rosethorn, rosy, stripetail, sharpchin, silvergray, halfbanded	Single Puget Sound
		Aurora, shortraker, greenspotted, & other coastal	Neah Bay vicinity

Natural Production

- Rockfish management shall place the highest priority on the protection and restoration of *indicator* rockfishes to healthy levels
  - Natural capacity of a population to sustain itself considering food web dynamics, targeted and fishery removals, other human-induced stressors, limiting factors, and climatic factors

Marine Protected Areas

- A **Marine Reserve** (MR) is a tool intended to allow permanent protection of a site specific, marine area. Depending on the site and corresponding needs, a marine reserve may be established to protect marine habitats, provide research opportunities and protect a variety of natural functions including fish reproduction. Full harvest restrictions will occur in marine reserves.

- A **Rockfish Conservation Area** (RCA) is a tool that can be used to rebuild rockfish stocks to healthy levels and to protect the genetic, size and age diversity of portions of rockfish populations. Depending on the site and corresponding needs, an RCA may be established as a permanent or temporary feature and will have specific harvest restrictions intended to meet the goal of rockfish protection at the site.

Natural Production

Strategies

- Protect and restore the genetic, size, and age diversity of indicator species.
- Identify and reduce stressors on indicator rockfish species within an ecosystem perspective.
- Implement holistic, integrated management strategies.

Habitat

- Protect and restore *all* marine habitats for *all* rockfish species.

Habitat

Strategies

- Enhance the effectiveness of WDFW habitat protection measures and programs to protect all rockfish habitats.
- Provide technical expertise to other agencies and interested groups to promote identification and protection of rockfish habitats.
- Restore degraded rockfish habitats including those impaired by poor water quality.
- Use marine reserves as tools to protect and restore rockfish stocks, habitats, and ecosystems.

Fishery Management

- *All* fisheries in Puget Sound waters will be managed to ensure the health and productivity of *all* rockfish stocks.

Fishery Management

Strategies

- Work with tribal co-managers to establish and implement fishery management guidelines that promote healthy rockfish stocks and restoration of the Puget Sound ecosystem.
- Manage commercial and recreational fisheries consistent with fishery management guidelines for all rockfish species.
- Minimize disruptions to other fisheries when possible.

Ecosystem

- Protect existing functions of indicator rockfishes and conduct activities to restore the functions of indicator rockfishes in the complex ecosystem and food web in Puget Sound.

Ecosystem

Strategies

- Ensure that the abundance, distribution, and structure of indicator rockfish stocks provide benefits to other species and ecosystem components.
- Identify and address the limiting ecosystem factors affecting the indicator species of rockfish, such as human-caused stressors, predation, and disease.
- Incorporate new information on the effects of climate change on the management of rockfish and their ecosystems.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptive Management

- Conduct monitoring, evaluation, and management of *indicator* rockfish stocks to provide the basis to evaluate stock status and success of management actions.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptive Management

Strategies

- Use fishery dependent and independent monitoring and other information to periodically assess indicator rockfish stocks.
- Work with tribal co-managers, citizens, agencies, Canada, and scientists in monitoring, evaluating, and managing rockfish stocks.
- Adopt flexible management and regulatory programs that will allow rapid change of regulations or policies in response to new information or altered environmental conditions.
- Regularly review progress towards the objectives and modify strategies or actions which are not producing desired results.
- Ensure species within an assemblage are receiving the desired benefits of the representative indicator species.
- Enforce rules and regulations that protect rockfish.

Research

- Implement new and cooperative research to understand the diversity, biology and productivity of *indicator* rockfishes as well as needs for recovery.

Research

Strategies

- Identify data gaps and research needed to successfully implement this plan.
- Increase partnerships with tribal co-managers, universities, Canadian scientists, non-governmental organizations and state and federal agencies.
- Rely upon a peer-review process to independently confirm the validity of research findings.
- Proceed with other actions in this Plan while research is being conducted.

Outreach, Education, & Ecotourism

- Conduct a strategic outreach and education program to inform Washington *citizens* of the value of rockfish stocks in Puget Sound and to promote ecotourism.

Outreach, Education & Ecotourism

Strategies

- Educate Washington residents about the efforts to conserve and restore rockfish populations in Puget Sound.
- Educate anglers about rockfish identification, methods of reducing the incidental encounters, and the use of release techniques that minimize mortality.
- Promote ecotourism by providing information about viewing opportunities for rockfish in Puget Sound.
- Regularly inform the public on the implementation of new initiatives, and progress towards achieving plan objectives.

Artificial Production

- Promote the achievement of the natural production policy objective through the appropriate use of :
  - Hatchery production to rebuild depleted rockfish stocks
  - Artificial habitats consistent with the hierarchy of habitat protection and mitigation approaches.

Artificial Production

Strategies

- Use hatchery production in combination with habitat, fishery and ecosystem strategies to restore depleted rockfish stocks to healthy levels.
- Develop and evaluate hatchery production techniques with the NOAA Fisheries and other partners for restoring depleted rockfish stocks.
- Artificial habitats may be used to restore and mitigate for degraded rockfish habitats.
- Balance the goal of utilizing natural production for rockfish with any proposed enhancement activity.

Implementation

- No retention east of Port Angeles by non-tribal fisheries
- 120 ft depth restriction for recreational bottomfishing
- Closed most commercial fisheries for bottomfish
- Fishery-independent surveys
  - Video, scuba, trawl
- Improved recreational catch estimation (review)
- GMA benchmarks for zero retention
- WDFW Conservation Initiative (EBM)
- Shrimp fishery observers
- Partner in derelict gear identification
- Continued AIS prevention
- Recreational dive guide
- Co-convened Rockfish Workshop