FORT BRAGG – CENTRAL COAST RISK POOL

Summary Report

2011

Fort Bragg Groundfish Association
A California Fish Marketing Act Corporation

Central Coast Sustainable Groundfish Association
A California Fish Marketing Act Corporation

The Nature Conservancy
A District of Columbia Non-profit Corporation

Introduction

This report describes an effort in the North and Central Coast of California to pool and minimize risk of catching overfished species in the first year of the Pacific Coast Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Groundfish Trawl Rationalization Program. Eight of the 29 IFQ species are federally designated as overfished species (OFS) and the quota pounds (QP) allocated annually for these eight species is therefore very small. Because catch of OFS is not entirely predictable, a fisherman could unintentionally harvest his or her entire annual QP allocation for one or more of the OFS during one trip or set, even when taking all reasonable measures necessary to avoid them. Under these circumstances, OFS catch could effectively limit access to relatively abundant target species otherwise available for harvest.

In order to coordinate efforts to reduce encounters with OFS and potentially increase harvests of target species, the Central Coast Sustainable Groundfish Association (CCSGA) and the Fort Bragg Groundfish Association (FBGA) entered into a formal risk pool arrangement for 2011 (the "Risk Pool"). Members of the Associations signed a formal agreement to pool some or all of their 2011 QP allocations for OFS and draw on the OFS QP pool they created to cover OFS catches during the year. Fourteen individual Association members participated in the Risk Pool for 2011. As parties to the Risk Pool agreement, the Associations' members prepared and adopted their own Fishing Plans and enforced related fishing rules that were intended to reduce the risk of an unintentional harvest of OFS. The goals of each Fishing Plan are to promote the long term success of the fishery and its supporting port communities, by:

(i) maximizing the harvest of target species from the fishery;
(ii) minimizing the take of OFS from the fishery,
(iii) safeguarding sensitive fish habitat off the Pacific Coast; and
(iv) contributing to the rebuilding of OFS stocks.

Risk Pool Fishing Plans

FBGA and CCSGA developed Fishing Plans that cover distinct geographic regions within the North and Central Coast and outline prescriptions for fishing in each region that align with the goals of the Risk Pool. Both Associations agreed to fish according to their most current Fishing Plan and fishermen agreed to use innovative technology to track and report on OFS catch. FBGA and CCSGA developed the Fishing Plans by first analyzing the available information and local knowledge to identify spatial areas with moderate or high risk of catching OFS. After the risk areas were identified, the groups developed zoning methodologies that paired gear type and relevant prescriptions – or rules – with geographic areas. Below is an example of a map that identifies risk and fishing zones and would be included in a Fishing Plan.

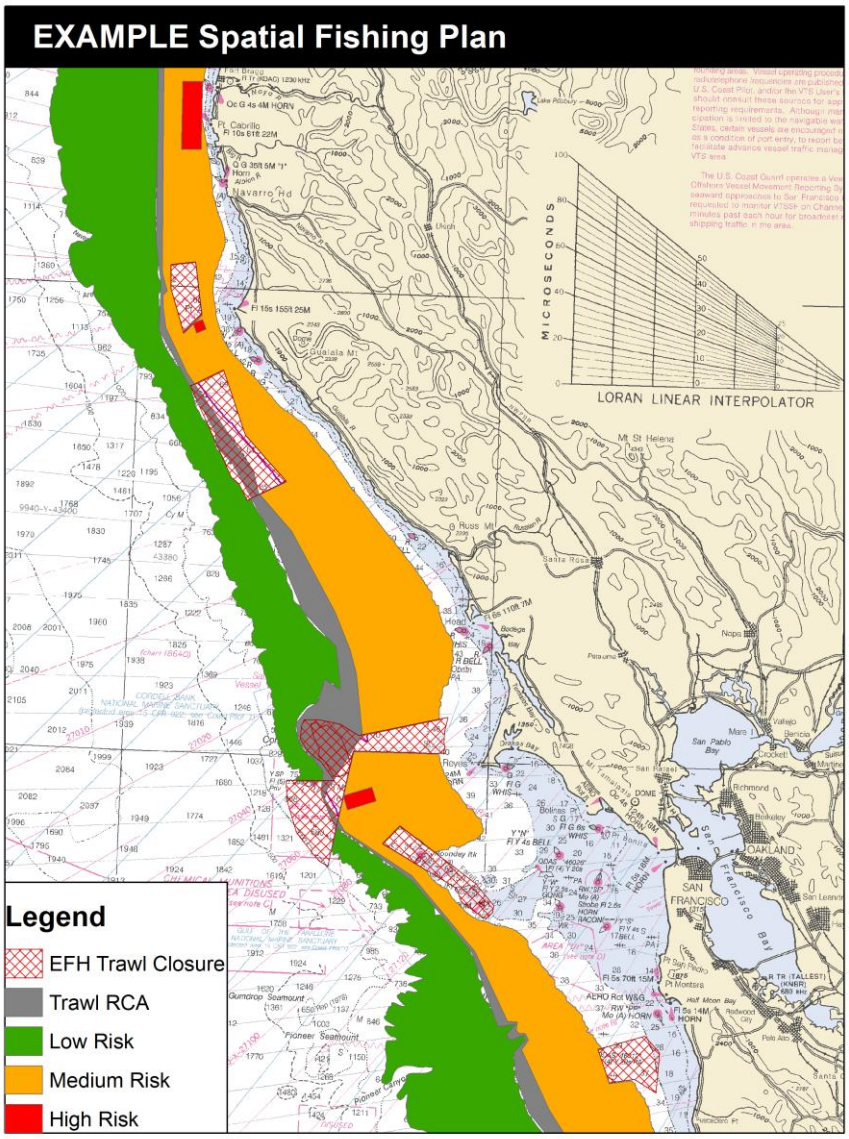


Figure 1. Example map of fishing areas in the Central Coast region that depicts high, medium and low risk zoned areas as well as existing management closures. Each zone would have specific fishing prescriptions.

Risk Pool OFS Quota Pound Summary

The Risk Pool included OFS QP from TNC and each Association's fishing members. The Risk Pool's QP was held and managed by the Risk Pool Managers in numerous OFS holding accounts (*e.g.* vessel accounts) for use by Risk Pool members. In Table 1 below, the column "QP Balance (Retransferred)" indicates the amount QP that was retransferred pro rata back into fishing members vessel accounts.

Table 1. Total contribution (in pounds) and use of OFS QP by the Risk Pool.

IFQ Species	Total Contribution	Total Use	QP Balance (Retransferred)
Bocaccio rockfish South of 40°10' N.	75,732	3,249	72,483
Canary rockfish	3,925	522	3,403
Cowcod South of 40°10' N.	2,315	16	2,299
Darkblotched rockfish	26,636	1,070	25,566
Pacific halibut (IBQ) North of 40°10' N.	16,812	0	16,812
Pacific ocean perch North of 40°10' N.	1,929	0	1,929
Widow rockfish	101,373	32	101,341
Yelloweye rockfish	90	0	90
TOTAL	228,812	4,889	223,923

Figure 2. Species breakdown of contributed QP in the Risk Pool.

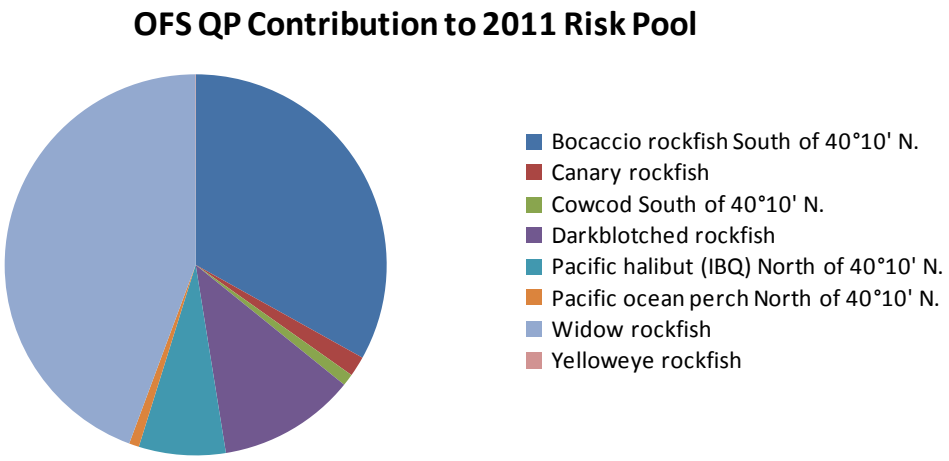
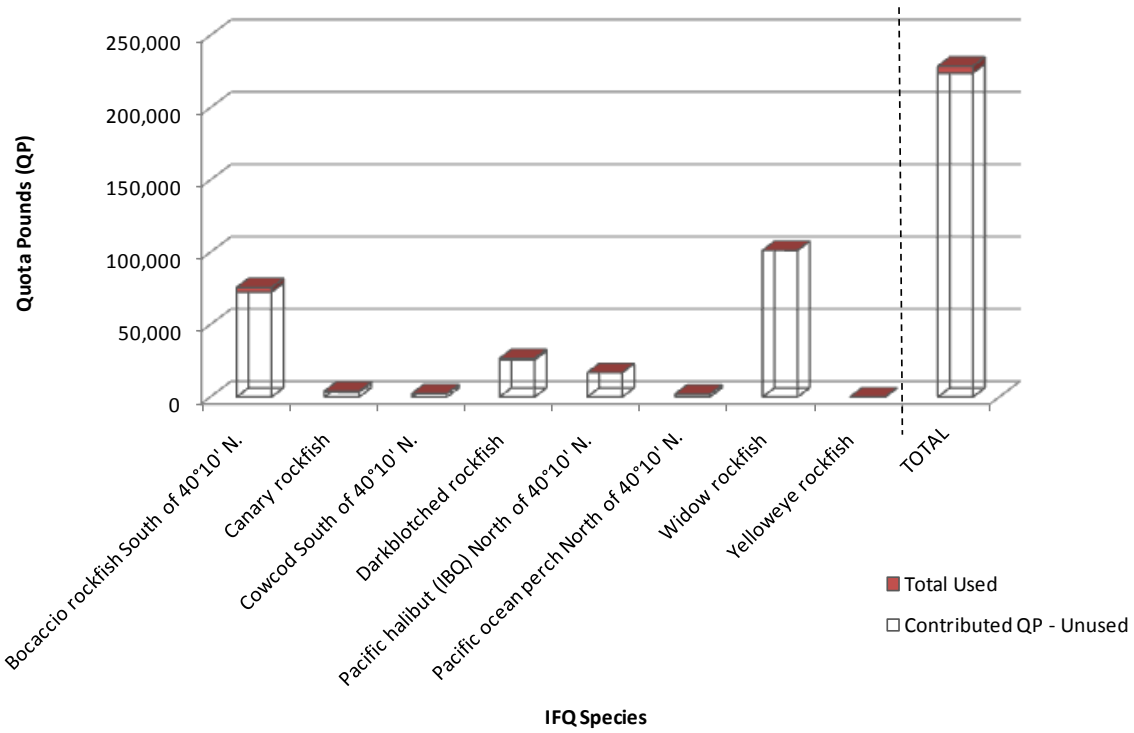


Figure 3. Total unused contribution (clear bars) and total use (red bars) of OFS QP by Risk Pool members.

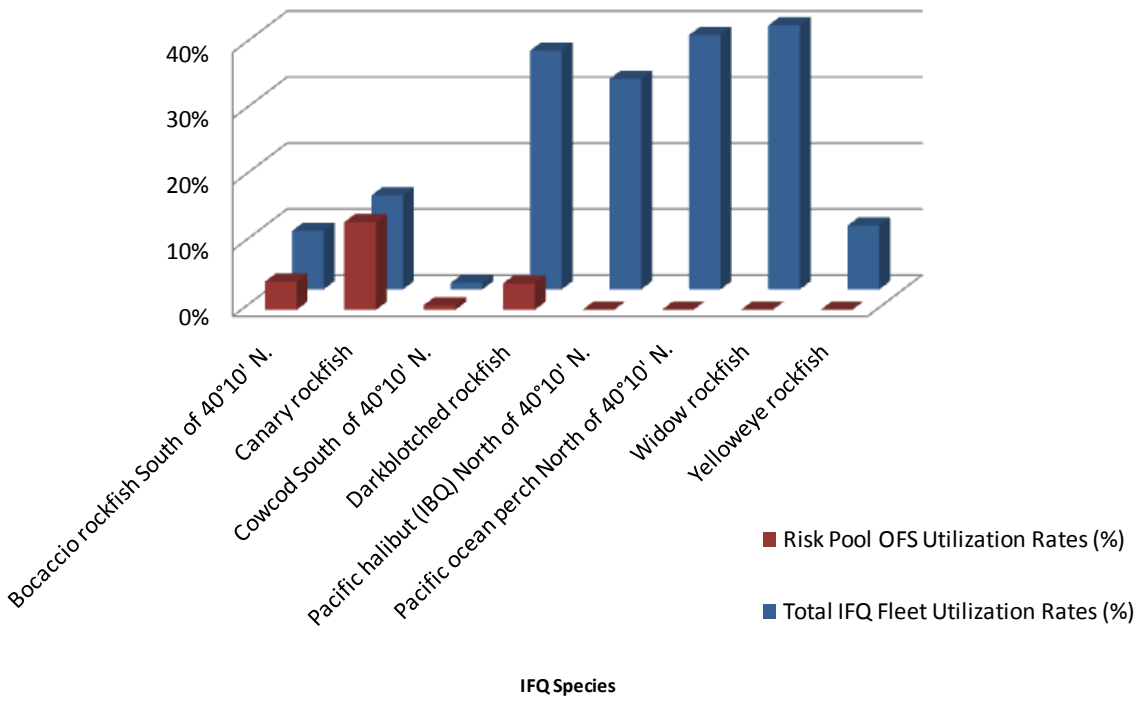


Risk Pool Results

OFS

The OFS utilization rates of the Risk Pool differed from those of the entire fleet fishing in the IFQ program. Because 2011 was the first year under the IFQ program – and because the Risk Pool did not begin operating until part way through the fishing season – utilization rates from 2011 should be evaluated with caution and may not be a good predictor for future performance. Given that caveat, it can be noted that the wider fleet utilization rate of OFS was greater than 30%, while the Risk Pool's utilization rate of OFS was **2.1%**. Figure 4 provides a visualization of the Risk Pool utilization rates for each species (red bars) versus the IFQ fleet utilization rates (blue bars).

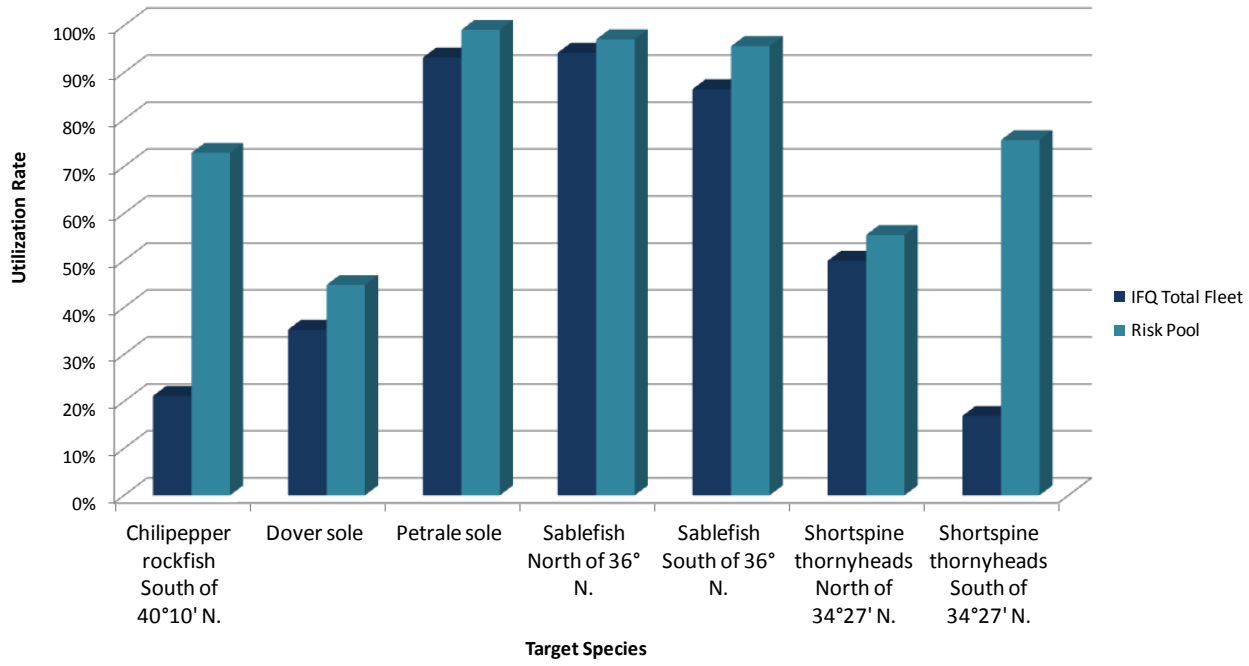
Figure 4. Overfished species QP utilization rates (in percentage) compared between the Risk Pool (red bars) and the Pacific Coast Groundfish IFQ total fleet (blue bars).



Target Species

Target species within the Pacific Coast groundfish IFQ fishery are generally dependent upon the gear type being deployed by the fishing operation. In 2011, vessels in the Risk Pool utilized fixed gear (both set longline and fish traps), Scottish seine, and trawl gear. Typical high value target species for these gear types include chilipepper rockfish, dover sole, petrale sole, sablefish, and shortspine thornyheads. The high value associated with these target species can be a result of the high quantity caught, or the ex-vessel price per pound. Compared to the total fleet, the Risk Pool's target species utilization rates for its seven target species were higher. These higher target species utilization rates should be considered in conjunction with the Risk Pool's low utilization rate of OFS QP compared to the total fleet. Figure 5 provides a graphical depiction of the utilization rates of target species for both the Risk Pool and the Pacific Coast IFQ total fleet.

Figure 5. Selected target species QP utilization rates (in percentage) compared between the Risk Pool (light blue bars) and the Pacific Coast IFQ total fleet (dark blue bars).

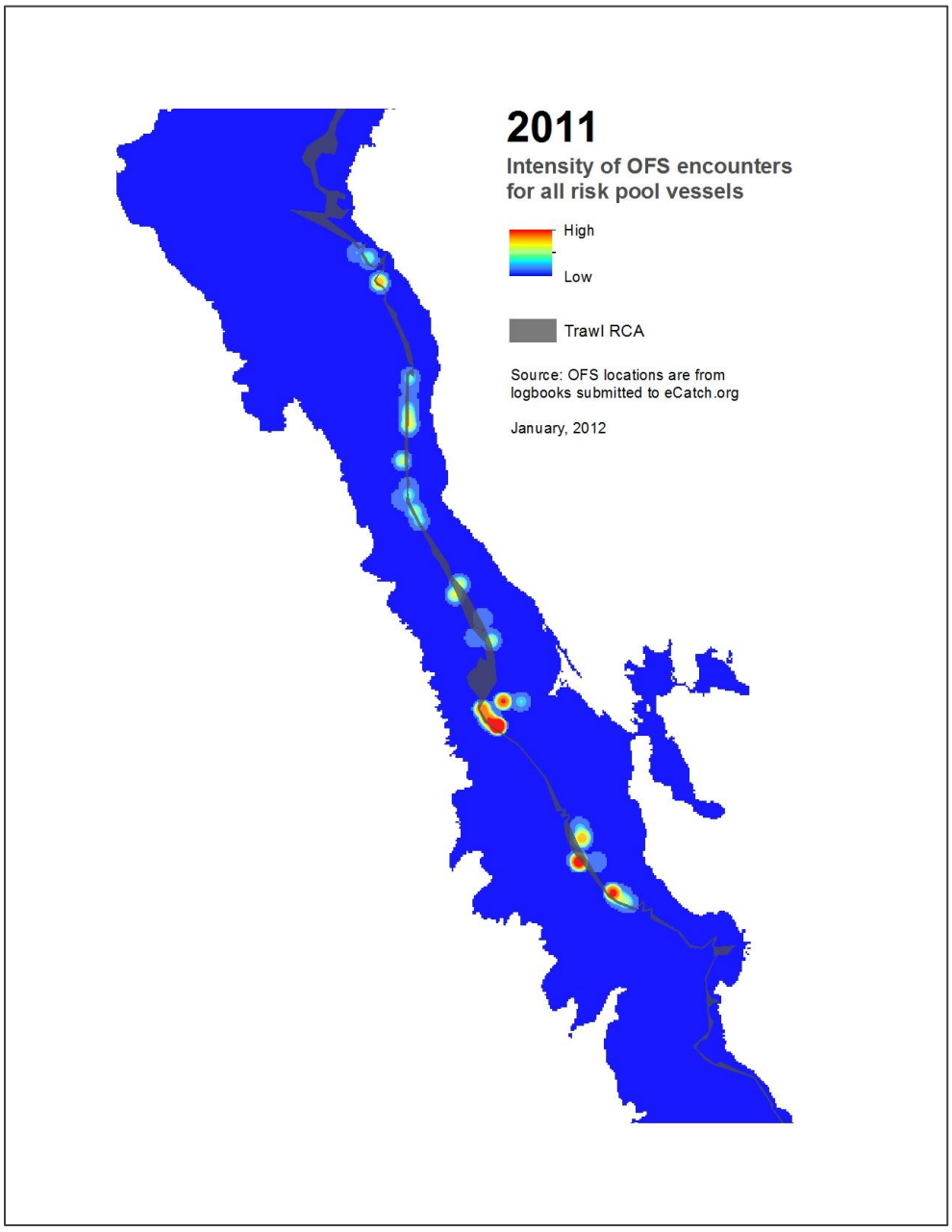


eCatch

Implementation of risk pools requires collection of up-to-date, low-cost and accurate data on the location, quantity, and species of OFS caught. To address this need and to maintain data integrity and efficiency, TNC created a web-based application called eCatch (www.ecatch.org) to allow fishermen to document where and when they fish and what and how much they catch using a modern tablet interface (*e.g.* an iPad). eCatch was tested during the first year of the Risk Pool and it enabled fishermen to see almost immediately the locations of where OFS have been caught by all members of the Risk Pool.

Figure 6 shows where OFS encounters occurred in 2011 and indicate the areas of higher potential risk that could be considered in the next round of Fishing Plan updates. As the map indicates, OFS encounters were highest along the boundaries of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA).

Figure 6. Intensity of OFS encounters for all Risk Pool vessels during 2011. (Refer to *eCatch* section above or visit www.ecatch.org for explanation of data source.)



Compliance and Monitoring

In the first year of the Risk Pool there were no incidences of non-compliance or violations of regional rules listed in the Fishing Plans. The 2011 Risk Pool agreement established steps that would be taken in the event of a compliance issue or possible violation. To determine compliance with spatial fishing restrictions and regional rules listed in Fishing Plans the Risk Pool Board may require subsequent audits of VMS data from violating vessels. Because there were no incidences of non-compliance or suspected violations there were no VMS audits during 2011.