

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON COUNCIL THREE-MEETING
OUTLOOK AND WORKLOAD PRIORITIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the Council three-meeting outlook (Agenda Item B.1.a) to assess GMT workload priorities. The GMT sees its top priorities through June 2007 as involvement in the Trawl Individual Quota (TIQ) program, 2007 Pacific whiting harvest specifications, groundfish stock assessments and STAR Panel review, and the intersector allocation process. Open access limitation is also a Council priority, however the GMT suggests that NMFS and the States meet over the winter for logistical discussions before that item is added to the GMT workload.

Dr. McIsaac asked the GMT to consider whether they would have time prior to the March 2007 meeting to work with Environmental Defense (ED) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on their Central California Coast Sustainable Groundfish Plan (Agenda Item B.1.d). The GMT expects to be fully committed with the previously identified priorities. The GMT recommends that the ED/TNC proposal be addressed through other Council initiatives. Namely, ED/TNC could pursue their proposed closed areas through the formal essential fish habitat designation process as outlined in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan section entitled "Habitat Conservation Framework." In addition, the GMT notes that the ED/TNC proposal is related only to central California and suggests that the Council fold these concepts into its evaluation of gear switching on a coastwide basis. The GMT has also discussed whether the topic of gear switching should be included in the TIQ analysis, the 2009-2010 biennial specifications, or considered through a separate amendment process. The GMT is in favor of the topic being considered through a separate process however plans to discuss this further with the Groundfish Allocation Committee in December 2006.

PFMC
11/17/06