The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard a presentation from Mr. Frank Lockhart on the draft Groundfish Bycatch Work Plan.

In general, the GAP continues to support efforts to increase and improve monitoring, data collection, and analysis; especially mechanisms that move us toward real-time data such as electronic fish tickets. The GAP encourages the Council to urge National Marine Fisheries Service, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and state agencies to prioritize development of these improved monitoring and reporting programs. Such programs will facilitate development of sector-specific bycatch limits and the trawl individual quota program.

Specific to the draft Bycatch Work Plan, the GAP has some concerns that the timelines outlined in the plan may be unrealistic; and furthermore believes that several of the ongoing efforts to reduce bycatch could be impeded by delays in monitoring and data collection improvements. The GAP has additional concerns that attempting to implement several of these projects simultaneously (indicated in Table 1) may result in Council process overload. There is also a significant concern that the annual specifications process will again result in overly restrictive regulations because all of the other efforts remain unaccomplished.

The GAP recommends that the document clearly state that the Bycatch Work Plan is a flexible work plan that can incorporate changes to both the projects and the timelines and that these can be amended easily through the Council process. The document should also explain how the work plan can be amended.

In all cases where references to ongoing research or other work is being completed, the lead agency or organization should be named so that it is clear who is the lead on projects.

In addition to the six programs outlined in Table 1 (page 7, Agenda Item D.2.a, Attachment 1), the GAP recommends an additional column identifying applied research programs dedicated to bycatch reduction. This could be a place to categorize and update ongoing federal and state efforts.

The GAP notes that in Table 1 there are no items related to the Groundfish Individual Trawl Quota (ITQ) program listed for the April and March 2007 meetings. The GAP finds this troubling and believes that ITQs should be addressed at these meetings in order to maintain the current schedule for moving toward implementation.

As stated in previous reports the GAP strongly believes that implementation of intersector allocation and the Groundfish ITQ programs will result in the greatest bycatch reduction for Groundfish fisheries.