

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
AMENDMENT 15: AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT ISSUES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for Amendment 15, which contained the range of alternatives set by the Council in April 2007 (Agenda Item E.11.b, Attachment 1). The GMT also reviewed the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Supplemental Report on Amendment 15 (Agenda Item E.11.b, Supplemental ODFW Report), which summarized alternatives from the EA, included suboptions for participation dates, and alternatives for analysis recommended for Council consideration by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (Agenda Item E.11.b, Attachment 3). The GMT thinks that the supplemental report captures an appropriate range of purpose and need options as well as matching those to an appropriate suite of action alternatives.

The GMT notes that this action is intended to be only an interim measure and will sunset upon implementation of trawl rationalization. Also, it is the GMT's understanding that the Council desires implementation by the 2008 whiting season. The GMT suggests that 2008 implementation be an over-arching need and has ranked the purpose and need statements provided in the ODFW report according to the feasibility of implementation by the deadline:

Purpose and Need 2. Purpose and Need 2 is reflective of the action taken under the NMFS emergency rule and thus may be easier to implement for the 2008 season because an EA has already been completed.

Purpose and Need 1. The scope is narrower than Purpose and Need 2 & 3, but lacks the existing analysis of Purpose and Need 2.

Purpose and Need 3. The GMT believes a purpose and need that considers alternatives for the non-whiting groundfish fishery is a non-starter relative to the goal of a 2008 implementation

The GMT recognizes that eliminating the requirement for some level of significant historical participation, in order to be included among the pool of whiting fishers under any of the alternatives, simplifies the analysis and likely reduces potential controversy surrounding individual qualification. This should help to streamline the development of a final alternative and enhance the likelihood that the alternative could be implemented in time for the 2008 whiting season. However, removing this requirement would also have the effect of broadening the pool of participants. While this expansion would likely be small, the GMT was unable to quantify that level.