

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 22:
OPEN ACCESS LICENSE LIMITATION

The groundfish Federal limited entry program was established in 1994 and did not include all vessels and their catch histories that landed groundfish during the qualification period. Participation in the “open access” (OA) portion of the fishery was left unlimited to ensure that vessels active in state-managed fisheries and/or landing groundfish incidentally in federally-managed fisheries, would continue to have access to that resource. However, conversion of the current open access groundfish fishery to limited entry management has been discussed several times in Council meetings since April 1998 (71 FR 64216) and was established as a Council priority with the adoption of the Groundfish Strategic Plan in 2000.

Limitation of the groundfish OA fishery was last considered by the Council at their March 2008 meeting. At that time, the Council considered a preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) entitled: Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment for Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Amendment 22: Conversion of the Open Access Fishery to Federal Permit Management. The report analyzed six permitting alternatives and issues that the Council approved at its June 2007 meeting. At that meeting, the Council provided additional guidance for EA development as follows: (1) delete alternative six (permit consolidation process and vessel length and gear endorsements), (2) add several additional qualification criteria, (3) analyze impacts of the alternatives on Washington fishermen, and (4) address concerns raised by the Scientific and Statistical Committee and other Council advisory bodies regarding various economic and biological issues.

The Draft EA has been updated and includes the analyses requested at the March 2008 meeting (Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 1) and a simple overview of Amendment 22 has been prepared for public use on the Council’s website (Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 2). A presentation of preliminary results was presented to the Groundfish Advisory Committee at its July 9-10, 2008 meeting in Portland, Oregon. Possible action at the September 2008 meeting could include (1) final action or (2) adoption of a preferred alternative for final action in March 2009. A possible implementation timeline is attached for Council consideration (Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 3).

Council Action:

- 1. Take final action or adopt a preliminary preferred alternative from the Amendment 22: Open Access Limitation Draft Environmental Assessment.**
- 2. Based on that discussion, determine a schedule for public hearings on the preliminary preferred alternative, if appropriate.**
- 3. Designate hearing officers, hearing locations and approximate hearing dates, if appropriate**
- 4. Discuss the attached Amendment Development and Implementation Schedule (Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 3).**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 1: Errata and Draft Environmental Assessment (Updated) for Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Amendment 22: Conversion of the Open Access Fishery to Federal Permit Management.
2. Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 2: Description of Amendment 22: Open Access (OA) from Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Website.
3. Agenda Item I.4.a, Attachment 3: Proposed Open Access Groundfish Fishery Conversion to Limited Entry and Permit Implementation Schedule.
4. Agenda Item I.4.c, Public Comments.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview LB Boydston
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Take Final Action or Adopt a Preliminary Preferred Alternative for Public Review

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