

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON THE STATUS OF THE RATIONALIZED TRAWL FISHERY

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard a report from Dr. Todd Lee and Ms. Erin Steiner on the Economic Data Collection Program and the first three years of data. At the outset, the GAP wishes to thank Dr. Lee and Ms. Steiner for producing the report.

Overall, the GAP believes that the report will serve as a useful indicator of trawl fishery trends and the relative success of the groundfish catch share program, and the 2011 fishing year. However, at this point we have only one year of data from the catch share program, and that fishing year may have been somewhat anomalous due to, among other things, particularly strong shrimp and crab seasons, record black cod prices, and a large whiting annual catch limit.

The GAP cautions against using the information in the report to make specific judgments about the profitability of the various fishing sectors. Rather, as noted above, it is the general up or down trend and the comparison between revenue pre- and post-catch share which is critical to judging the success of the program. The GAP highlights, as does the report itself, that cost information is incomplete and the GAP is concerned that the report will be used to paint a misleading picture about the profitability of the various fishing and processing sectors. It appears that may already be occurring, based on comments in the briefing book.

The GAP notes that the kind of detailed economic data in the report has long been absent from the fisheries management process, and recommends considering the collection of economic information from all fishery sectors. More detailed economic data could prove particularly useful when considering rebuilding plans and justifying deviations from the requirement to rebuild species as quickly as possible. To date, economic impacts and benefits have been measured by ex-vessel price, which is largely inadequate.

Some members of the GAP expressed interest in reducing the frequency of collection from annually to a longer interval (perhaps every three years) after an initial period of yearly collection through the five-year review.

Several members also noted that the form itself was much more time-consuming than estimated by the agency. While noting its importance, they wished to highlight how onerous the process is.

The GAP also heard a brief report on the socioeconomic survey. The GAP thanks Ms. Suzanne Russell for compiling the survey, and expressed interest in seeing more up to date information. The GAP notes that the terminology is inconsistent between the economic data collection report and the socioeconomic survey, and recommends using identical language in the future so that meaningful inferences and comparisons can be made. For example, the definitions of first receivers/processors are inconsistent between the two surveys.