

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON POTENTIAL TRAILING ACTIONS TO AMENDMENT 20 TRAWL RATIONALIZATION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received an overview of trailing amendment process and timeline from Mr. Jim Seger. The GAP understands that only two or three of the major trailing amendments can realistically be handled given other staff priorities and time constraints. In discussing trailing amendments, the GAP focused on those issues with the potential to cause severe, widespread, and immediate economic hardship to the fleet coastwide or on a broad regional scale, and asks the Council to approve trailing amendments which will help to address those problems. With that in mind, the GAP suggests the Council pursue the following trailing amendments as quickly as possible:

- Halibut allocation
- Overfished species allocations
- Risk pools

Halibut allocation – A low fleetwide allocation of halibut in relation to historic discard has the potential to shut down the entire fleet north of 40°10'. The GAP believes that the amount of halibut allotted to the trawl fishery will unnecessarily constrain landings of target species leading to severe economic impacts for individual fishermen, as well as processors and communities. The GAP asks the Council to support an adjustment to the halibut allocation as quickly as possible to provide the trawl rationalization program the best chance to succeed.

Overfished species allocations – Like halibut, overfished species allocations are likely to have severe economic impacts on individual fishermen and may lead to disastrous consequences for certain ports and communities. The GAP suggests that not only yelloweye, but other overfished species as well (such as cowcod, where several permits also received no allocation), may lead to those negative outcomes, and for that reason suggests broadening this trailing amendment to include all overfished species.

Risk pools – The GAP feels that risk pools are critical to the program due to the low allocations of overfished species and halibut and the potential for a “lightning strike” even if fishermen adopt avoidance practices such as short tows and avoiding hotspots. In the absence of risk pools, individual fishermen are likely to be shut down for the entire year, even for relatively small catches of overfished species, and if that is pervasive, processors and communities will also suffer. The GAP understands that long-term risk pools have the potential to implicate the control cap and specifically seeks an exception to the control caps to authorize this critical tool.

In addition to the above items which need immediate attention, the GAP also recommends the Council pursue the following trailing amendments, which are not as time-sensitive and do not have the potential shut the fishery down:

- Severability
- Permit stacking

- Amendment 6 fix
- 30 day overage

Severability – Approximately 22 more permits were allotted mothership/catcher vessel history than currently participate. In general, the allocations to those permits are very small. Without the ability to sever that quota from the permit, a current participant will have to buy the permit in order to have permanent access to the catch history. The cost of buying the permit will be disproportionate to the value of the catch history. Severability will also allow those who wish to participate the ability to retain their permit to harvest non-mothership (MS) individual fishing quota to sell their catch history rather than choosing to join a co-op, fish in the non-co-op fishery or just strand their fish. Severability is supported by the MS sector and is consistent with the goals of Amendment 20.

Permit stacking – At present only one permit transfer is allowed per year. This restriction will constrain fishermen holding both trawl and fixed gear permits in their ability to switch back and forth, thereby potentially limiting the ability to time markets for maximum value. Allowing fishermen to stack LE trawl and fixed gear permits would alleviate this problem.

Amendment 6 fix – The GAP feels that Amendment 21 was meant to supersede Amendment 6. National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) rejection of that portion of the rationalization package will cause hardship for fixed gear fishermen at the expense of open access fishermen. The GAP asks the Council to remedy this problem. In addition, NMFS’ interpretation effectively traps EFP fish within the set asides, preventing other fisheries from accessing that fish in the event an EFP is not enacted. The GAP requests the Council to remedy this issue.

30 day overage – The GAP believes that the current 30 day overage provision is unduly restrictive, onerous, and fails to take into account that time spent out of the fishery is already a significant penalty. The GAP asked the Council under Agenda Item I.5.c to comment on the proposed rule to authorize fishermen within the 10 percent overage the option of declaring back into the fishery at any time during the year. In the event that change is not made to the final rule, the GAP asks the Council to add this to the list for trailing amendments.

The GAP engaged in significant discussion on other trailing amendments including adaptive management and community fishing associations, but came to the conclusion that they did not rise to same level of priority as the issues mentioned above. Using the criteria of potential to cause severe and immediate economic hardship, the GAP decided that the following trailing amendments should not be undertaken at this time. However, the GAP suggests that these amendments may be worthy of additional consideration at the appropriate time.

Widow rockfish reallocation

The GAP believes widow rockfish reallocation is not an immediate priority because it will require another assessment before it is technically rebuilt. While reallocating widow will offer an additional target fishery and the GAP strongly supports this, it does not rise to the level of priority as the items mentioned above.

Community Fishing Associations (CFAs)

The GAP does not recommend CFAs as a short-term priority. Some members of the GAP see CFAs as a valuable tool for communities and fishermen, but feel that more time is needed to work out the details. In contrast, many members of the GAP were concerned about providing exceptions to the control caps for CFAs. The entire GAP agrees that CFA use and make-up should not be mandatory, and that trawl licenses should be required to harvest trawl quota.

The GAP also feels that no additional committees should be formed to work on these trailing amendments. The GAP believes that the current advisory bodies have the expertise and the time to provide any needed input.

PFMC

09/14/10