

GROUND FISH TRIP LIMIT FOR PINK SHRIMP FISHERY

Situation: At the November 1999 meeting, the Council wished to delay decision on the groundfish trip limit for vessels operating in the 2000 pink shrimp fishery, but needed to establish a "placeholder" regulation to be included in the *Federal Register* notice. There was an announced intent that this placeholder be reviewed at the March 2000 meeting. This interim measure is similar to the measure that was in effect during the 1999 shrimp season. The 1999 regulation stated that, beginning April 1, 1999, vessels participating in the pink shrimp fishery were restricted to 500 pounds of groundfish per day, not to exceed 2,000 pounds per trip, and most open access trip limits applied toward the groundfish "per trip" limit. Exceptions were made for Dover sole and whiting, which were constrained only by the overall groundfish limit. The *Federal Register* notice for 2000 specifies a trip limit is 500 lb per day, not to exceed 2,000 lb per trip, and states that for open access vessels participating in the shrimp fishery, no other open access limits apply. However, regulations in other sections of the *Federal Register* notice appear to restrict limited entry vessels to not more than any limited entry trip limit, creating a situation where limited entry vessels operating in the shrimp fishery would be constrained to tighter incidental catch controls than open access vessels operating in the shrimp fishery.

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) discussed trip limit amounts and this issue of two different classes of shrimp fishing vessels at its February meeting. GMT members expressed their belief that 500 pounds of groundfish per day would not be constraining on most shrimp fishing activities, given the trip frequency information from 1999. They also noted that in previous years, most open access limits also applied, but limits are so reduced in 2000 they may result in discard of some groundfish species taken in the shrimp fishery. The GMT also noted that the placeholder language may not sufficiently share the conservation burden for such stocks as canary rockfish, which is currently in a rebuilding phase and limited elsewhere to 50 pounds per month.

As anticipated in November, the Council should now confirm or revise the placeholder limits. Staff recommends that final action consider the following questions that have been posed since November:

1. Is 500 pounds of all groundfish per day, not to exceed 2,000 pounds per trip, an appropriate limit for both open access and limited entry vessels?
2. Should other open access or limited entry poundage limits also apply for such stocks as canary rockfish, and should they apply to both open and limited access vessels?
3. Should any minimum size limits apply (currently, there are minimum size limits for sablefish, lingcod, and various California rockfish)?

Finally, the GMT made a point of not endorsing different limits for vessels with and without groundfish limited entry permits.

Council Action:

- 1. Consider revisions to shrimp trawl trip limit.**

PFMC
02/23/00