

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
EFFORTS TO REDUCE YELLOWTAIL ROCKFISH CATCH IN THE WHITING FISHERY:
REVIEW OF EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from representatives of onshore and off-shore whiting fishermen and processors regarding actions proposed for 2000 to reduce rockfish bycatch in the whiting fishery. The proposals would require a number of industry initiatives, in conjunction with state permit requirements, to avoid and minimize rockfish bycatch, as required by law. The GAP believes this program should be allowed to proceed and then analyzed at the end of the year to determine its success.

The GAP notes the program will not apply to the early California whiting fishery, as that fishery has already begun. Further, as noted by the Groundfish Management Team at the March 2000, Council meeting, rockfish bycatch does not appear to be a significant problem in California. Finally, the GAP notes comments made in March regarding operational difficulties with establishing this particular program in California.

However, the GAP wishes to express its strong concern over the reported high levels of salmon and rockfish bycatch in the tribal whiting fishery. These numbers are masked by NMFS' insistence on combining them with non-tribal mothership catches, which are much lower. The GAP urges the Council to take whatever steps it can to reduce salmon and rockfish bycatch in the tribal whiting fishery.

PFMC
04/05/00