

April 2000

**Testimony of the Makah Tribe on Efforts to Reduce Yellowtail Bycatch in the Whiting  
Fishery  
April 7, 2000**

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1999 Season

In 1999, the Makah Tribe required that whenever feasible, all ~~yellowtail~~ rockfish be retained and processed aboard the Excellence and forfeited to the tribe for non-commercial use.

To implement this, all rockfish bycatch was sorted by species, hand tallied, average weights determined, and the fish were headed and gutted and frozen in 24 kg bags. Any fish not of food grade quality was discarded (ie: undersized or poor quality fish).

The processed rockfish were then delivered to cold storage and later distributed to food banks by "Northwest Harvest". A total of 119,976 kg were delivered to cold storage.

By retaining and counting the rockfish bycatch, we estimate a total bycatch of yellowtail rockfish in 1999 of 204 mt compared to the 451 mt estimate generated from the observer data.

We have been unable to reconcile the <sup>two</sup> ~~low~~ estimates, so in 2000, we plan to periodically monitor the observer activities and more closely coordinate with NMFS Regional Office and the observer program to correct this problem.

2000 Season

We plan to continue the retention of rockfish in 2000 and will implement additional measures aimed at reducing the rockfish bycatch.

These include:

- 1) Reporting to the catcher vessel the amount of rockfish in a tow as soon as possible after the delivery.
- 2) Providing the vessels with daily tow by tow reports on the amount of whiting, rockfish, and salmon in the catch.
- 3) Coordinating weekly catch reviews with the tribe, the processor, and catcher vessels.

Our objective in these activities is to respond to high levels of bycatch in a timely manner and to correlate bycatch with the time, area, depth, or other variables in the fishery.