

DRAFT SUMMARY MINUTES
Groundfish Advisory Subpanel

Pacific Fishery Management Council
DoubleTree Hotel - Columbia River
Willamette Room
1401 North Hayden Island Drive
Portland, OR 97217
(503) 283-2111
June 26 - 28, 2000

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. by Mr. Don Hansen, Chair.

Members in Attendance

Mr. Wayne Butler
Mr. Barry Cohen
Mr. John Crowley
Mr. Ken Culver
Mr. Tom Ghio
Mr. Don Hansen, Chair
Mr. Marion Larkin

Mr. Peter Leipzig
Mr. Rod Moore, Vice Chair
Mr. Dale Myer
Dr. Mark Powell (for Dr. Joshua Sladek Nowlis)
Mr. Kelly Smotherman
Mr. Frank Warrens

Groundfish Advisory Subpanel Comments to the Council on June 2000 Agenda Items

MARINE RESERVES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a briefing on the staff report on Marine Reserves - Phase I and has the following comments.

The GAP believes establishing marine reserves is one of many tools that should be available to the Council. However, the GAP will withhold comment on establishing reserves in any particular area until Phase II is begun.

The GAP disagrees with presenting various approaches as "options", which lead to the assumption that other variations have been considered and rejected. The GAP agrees potential percentages of protected areas or biomass should be identified (such as the 5%, 20%, 35%, and 50% presented in the report) in order to give the public some idea of the degree of protection that is contemplated. However, the GAP believes these concepts should be presented in the form of descriptive paragraphs and not identified as options.

The GAP notes the Ad-Hoc Marine Reserve Committee and the Ad-Hoc Groundfish Strategic Plan Development Committee are operating on parallel tracks, with both committees discussing marine reserves. The GAP recommends action on marine reserves be taken in the context of the Council's strategic plan, and not as a stand-alone management measure.

Finally, the GAP recommends the entire staff report be made available for public review, so the public has the benefit of the full range of discussion.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The GAP spent several hours discussing the draft plan. Our ability to fully comment was hampered by the fact most GAP members did not have time to review the plan prior to the GAP meeting. The GAP notes sections of the plan call for smoother flow of information and hope this applies to the Council's advisory entities.

In general, the GAP agrees a strategic plan is helpful in allowing participants in the fishery to develop their individual plans for the future. The vision statement in the draft plan is generally acceptable, although the GAP suggests one editorial change: on page 7 of the draft plan, in the first paragraph under "1. The Fishery", add at the end of the third sentence - "and continues to be adjusted to be in balance with other components of the strategic plan." If the plan is implemented, additional reductions in harvest capacity may be necessary to keep the balance envisioned.

Beyond the vision statement, the GAP has difficulties in providing constructive comments at this time. There are concerns about inconsistencies within the implementation section. For example, the ability to accurately manage on a weak-stock basis requires a major revision of both state and federal laws, regulations, and policies, as well as a considerable infusion of funds. The Council has no control over these matters. How can weak stock management be a priority if there is no way to control its achievement?

Similar problems are found with capacity reduction language. The GAP agrees, as it has many times before, that capacity reduction should be the highest priority. However, in order for capacity reduction to work, some sort of allocation is necessary. The draft plan gives capacity reduction a high priority, but considers allocation to be an intermediate-to-long-term objective.

The GAP also believes insufficient thought has been given to the cumulative effect the various goals will have. It is unclear what kind of priority is given, if any, to the various proposed recommendations; or if any thought has been given to what happens if we do several of these simultaneously.

Many of the recommendations will also require substantial funding. Where is the funding to come from? Should we adopt a "pay-as-you-go" strategy, so recommendations are not carried out if the source of funding is unclear?

One area where we strongly agree is the need to build trust among advisory entities. The GAP and the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) often meet jointly and try to present consensus recommendations to the Council. We would welcome the opportunity to work in a similar cooperative manner with other advisory entities.

We also agree the Council needs to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the GAP. The GAP makes a concerted effort to be responsive to the Council and its constituents, but we are hampered by limited meeting times and conflicts between GAP meetings and Council actions that require participation by GAP members. We share a single Council staff member with the GMT, which puts a strain on both bodies and certainly on that staff member. These issues need to be addressed if the GAP is to continue to be effective.

GAP members will provide individual comments on the draft plan as they get a chance to review it more thoroughly. While we will make an attempt to provide more comprehensive comments as a group, it is unlikely we will be able to do so prior to the next strategic planning committee meeting for the simple reason most GAP members have to tend to their fishing and processing operations. Our preference would be for the Council to delay sending the draft plan out for public review until September. In any case, when public review is complete, the GAP believes one or two representatives of the GAP and other advisory entities be involved in analysis of public comments.

STOCK ASSESSMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2001

The GAP reviewed the list of stocks proposed to be assessed in 2001 and agrees with the choices made. However, the GAP has the following additional comments:

1. Although convening a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel for three assessments is difficult, NMFS should take this step with the Dover, sablefish, and shortspine thornyhead assessments. These species are caught in conjunction with each other and reviewing the assessments as a group makes more sense.
2. STAR Panel meetings should be held in locations where sufficient computer and administrative support is available, including telephones, printers, and copying machines.

STATUS OF FISHERIES AND INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The GAP met jointly with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and offers the following recommendations for inseason adjustments:

Limited Entry

1. For all gears, increase slope rockfish cumulative limits in the south to 7,000 pounds per two-month period.
2. For all gears, reduce shelf rockfish cumulative limits in the south to 500 pounds per month.

These two recommendations are made in the interest of protecting weak stocks.

3. For fixed gear, increase nearshore rockfish cumulative limits in the north to 5,000 pounds per two-month period, with a maximum of 1,800 pounds being species other than blue or black rockfish.
4. For fixed gear, increase nearshore rockfish cumulative limits in the south to 2,000 pounds per two-month period.

These two recommendations are made to allow target attainment.

5. For the fixed gear daily-trip-limit sablefish fishery, increase the cumulative limit to 3,300 pounds per two-month period, while maintaining the daily limit of 300 pounds.

This recommendation is made to allow a reasonable harvest of sablefish in this fishery while avoiding confusion with different daily trip limits.

6. For the small footrope trawl fishery in the north, remove the current two-month cumulative limit on yellowtail rockfish and substitute the following:
 - a. The "per trip" limit for yellowtail rockfish is the sum of 10% of the weight of arrowtooth flounder plus 33% of the weight of flatfish other than arrowtooth, not to exceed 7,500 pounds of yellowtail per trip.
 - b. A vessel using a small footrope may not land yellowtail unless it is also landing flatfish.
 - c. A vessel may not exceed the 30,000-pound cumulative limit per two-month period regardless of gear used.

Open Access

1. For slope rockfish in the south, increase the cumulative limit to 1,000 pounds per two-month period. This will allow a modest increase while protecting weak stocks.

2. For nearshore rockfish in the north, increase the cumulative limit to 2,500 pounds per two-month period, with a maximum of 900 pounds of species other than black or blue rockfish. The GAP understands allowing this higher cumulative limit may result in early attainment and closure for this fishery.
3. For nearshore rockfish in the south, increase the cumulative limit to 1,600 pounds per two-month period. This will allow a year-round fishery to be maintained.
4. For the fixed gear daily-trip-limit sablefish fishery, increase the cumulative limit to 3,300 pounds per two-month period, with a daily-trip-limit of 300 pounds.

SABLEFISH THREE-TIER FISHERY SEASON AND LIMITS

The GAP received a report from the GMT on options for the sablefish three-tier fishery.

The GAP recommends adopting a more conservative model which would allow cumulative limits of 85,500 pounds; 38,500 pounds; and 22,000 pounds for Tiers 1, 2, and 3 respectively, in an eight-day season.

The GAP was unable to agree on a starting date for the 2000 season. The two dates recommended were August 6 and September 1. Advantages and disadvantages were cited for both dates by representatives of the fixed gear fishery.

At the request of Council member Mr. Bob Alverson, the GAP also discussed potential modifications to existing regulations regarding permit transfers. The GAP recommends regulations be changed to allow a permit to be transferred once each calendar year. A transferred permit could not be used until the beginning of the next cumulative period following date of transfer.

PLAN AMENDMENT TO ADDRESS BYCATCH AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE ISSUES

The GAP received a briefing on the proposed amendment to the Pacific groundfish fishery management plan to address bycatch.

The GAP supports the alternatives identified as "preferred" for bycatch definitions, standardized reporting methodologies, bycatch reduction provisions, and annual management framework provisions.

For removal of limited entry permit endorsements (identified as a housekeeping measure), the GAP recommends the Council adopt alternative number 2.

AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The GAP received an update on analysis of the American Fisheries Act (AFA). From the initial Council staff presentation, it was clear there was confusion in interpreting the GAP's recommendation from the April Council meeting.

As clarification, it was the intent of the GAP there be three separate qualification criteria for vessels. These criteria are specific to each sector and qualify the vessel only for that sector. They were not meant to cross qualify a vessel from one sector into all sectors.

The GAP recommends Council staff complete the draft amendment, so we can provide constructive comments on a final draft.

PROCESS FOR TECHNICAL REVIEW AND MONITORING OF REBUILDING PLANS

The GAP had a discussion with Ms. Cyreis Schmitt concerning the various approaches that could be used to review rebuilding plans and methods to monitor the rebuilding of concerned stocks.

The GAP had numerous questions about how a review of rebuilding will occur every two years when new assessments will likely only occur once every three years.

The GAP was also concerned for many of the species for which there are, or will be, rebuilding plans, the reduced catch or other regulations have eliminated or modified the data that has been used in the past for stock assessments. New survey or other data collection programs will need to be initiated soon to accumulate the necessary time series of information to measure change in these stocks.

The GAP supports the use of a Stock Assessment Review Panel approach for the review of rebuilding plans and further recommends one such panel conduct the review of all rebuilding plans on an annual basis. We feel the intense review that is required for these plans is so similar to the review of stock assessments that other Council committees (the Groundfish Management Team and Scientific and Statistical Committee) could not devote the time for a thorough review.

CANARY ROCKFISH REBUILDING PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Rick Methot presented the draft canary rockfish rebuilding analysis to the GAP. The canary analysis applies only to the northern assessment, but the results are applicable coastwide. The draft analysis indicates coastwide catch should be reduced to zero for ten years in order to initiate the stock rebuilding, and catches would then increase gradually for a total of 54 years. The GAP recognizes catch cannot be reduced to zero without eliminating nearly all commercial and recreational fishing between about 20 fathoms and 150 fathoms. However, it appears from preliminary 2000 catch data that canary catch has already been reduced to a small fraction of the 1999 level. The GAP recommends the analysis be re-run assuming a low level of canary catch, and the Council should begin evaluating whether more restrictive measures would merely reduce landings but not actual catch, or cause the industry to forego revenues from other fisheries that take canary incidentally.

COWCOD REBUILDING PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Dr. John Butler presented the draft cowcod rebuilding analysis to the GAP. The draft cowcod analysis indicates catch in the Conception area needs to be reduced to between about 500 pounds to a few thousand pounds per year. This would require elimination of all commercial and recreational fishing for this species. The GAP recommends the Council consider whether area closures could accomplish the rebuilding needs and perhaps hasten rebuilding compared to merely prohibiting all retention.

Needless to say, the GAP is greatly concerned about the impact of these rebuilding requirements on all groundfish fishers and the coastal communities along the entire West Coast.

DEFAULT MAXIMUM SUSTAINABLE YIELD FISHING RATE WITHIN THE HARVEST RATE POLICY

The GAP continues to recommend, as it did in April, the new proposed rates be phased in to avoid significant adverse effects to the fishery. The phase-in can be accomplished for those species not under rebuilding plans by applying the new rates as new stock assessments are conducted. The GAP notes the calculations required to apply the new rates are nearly as extensive as those needed to perform an assessment.

For species under rebuilding plans, the GAP anticipates the rebuilding strategy will guide appropriate rates.

PFMC
08/25/00

