

APPORTIONMENT OF SABLEFISH BYCATCH ESTIMATES

**Situation:** At the September Council meeting, the Council passed a two-element motion regarding the issue of apportioning sablefish bycatch between various harvest sectors. The first element was to distribute, for public review, three options to change from the status quo approach. The second element was to provide a chronology of the Council record on how this issue was dealt with in the past. The information below describes the three options that are alternatives to the current approach; this information was included in the Council Newsletter to help focus review and comment. Due to the short period between the September and November meetings, the staff was not able to provide the chronological record of previous Council considerations on this matter.

In response to the Groundfish Strategic Plan, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT), has provided the Council with data that allows consideration for a different method of accounting for sablefish bycatch/discard in the various commercial fishery sectors. In particular, options would no longer deduct sablefish discard "off the top" of all fishery sectors (see 2001a in table below), but rather discard amounts would be deducted from each major sector individually. Options for Council consideration at the November meeting include status quo (10% off the top of all sectors, 2001a); 17.7% off the top of all sectors (2001b); sector-specific discard rates applied to each sector (2001c); and sector-specific discard rates for tribal and open access fisheries, with distribution of total and landed catch between limited entry trawl and fixed gear based on historical catch with an assumed 29% trawl discard rate (2001d). The net general effect of changing to an individual sector-based discard assessment is to reduce the landing allowable for the trawl fisheries and increase the allowable landings for the aggregate tribal, open access, and fixed gear fisheries.

New information from the Enhanced Data Collection Program (EDCP) indicates trawl bycatch is higher than previous estimates of 10% of total catch. EDCP information indicates trawl discard is 29% of trawl total catch, which is equal to 17.7% of all-sectors total catch (2001b). Note that a lower discard rate is assumed for the limited entry fixed gear fishery than for the open access or tribal fisheries, because the majority of the limited entry fixed gear allocation is taken in the derby fishery, which leaves little opportunity for discard.

**Overview of approximate sablefish poundage (in metric tons) available to various sectors under alternative discard accounting approaches.**

	2001a	2001b	2001c	2001d	Preliminary Assumed Discard Mortality	
	mts	mts	mts	mts	Change from 2001b	
Discard Accounting Method	10% Off the Top	17.7% Off the Top	Individual Sector	Individual Sector		
Allocation (LE Trawl/Fixed-gear)	58%/ 42% Landed Catch	58% / 42% Landed Catch	58% / 42% Total Catch	61% / 39% Total Catch (58% / 42% Landed Catch)		
OY (mt)	6,895	6,895	6,895	6,895		
Discard	690	1,220				
Tribal	621	567	621	621	+9%	10%
Open Access	525	480	525	525	+9%	10%
Limited Entry						
Trawl	2,935	2,684	2,315	2,435	-14%	29%
Fixed-gear	2,125	1,943	2,220	2,061	+14%	6%

**Council Action:**

- 1. Consider adoption of a different sablefish bycatch accounting and apportionment approach, including discard rate estimates.**

**Reference Materials:**

1. A Preliminary Analysis of Discarding in the 1995-1999 West Coast Groundfish Fishery (Exhibit C.2, Supplemental NMFS Report).

PFMC

10/16/00