

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL COMMENTS ON
FINAL HARVEST LEVELS FOR 2001

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed proposed harvest levels and specifications for the 2001 groundfish fishery.

The GAP used Groundfish Management Team (GMT) Report 1 under this agenda item as the basis for its recommendations on harvest levels. The GAP notes this report will be supplemented with changes when it is presented to the Council. A majority of the GAP provides the following recommendations regarding 2001 Optimum Yields (OYs):

For whiting, the GAP notes the projected OY for the U.S. portion of the fishery is now projected to be 190,400 mt, based on the 1998 stock assessment. While the GAP believes the projection is low, the GAP recommends accepting this figure with the knowledge a more complete assessment will be made following the 2001 acoustic survey.

For sablefish in the Conception area, the GAP strongly disagrees with the 55% reduction in harvest proposed for 2001. There are no new data available to justify such an arbitrary reduction. The GAP recommends harvest levels be set closer to the ABC.

For Pacific Ocean perch, the GAP recommends the Council adopt the conservative OY of 626 mt identified in the GMT report. The most recent stock assessment demonstrates this level of harvest can be maintained while still providing rebuilding.

For widow rockfish, the GAP recommends a harvest level in the middle of the range noted in the GMT report, due to uncertainty in stock status.

For canary rockfish, as noted in the GAP comments on agenda item C.1, the GAP recommends a harvest level in the range of 120 to 150 mt, based on more reasonable assumptions of recruitment and recognizing the strength of the southern stock and uncertainties in the data and the most recent stock assessments.

For darkblotched rockfish, the GAP recommends an OY of 130 mt, based on an estimate of the amount of darkblotched assumed present in historic foreign catch figures. As it has previously, the GAP strongly recommends the Council resolve the issue of double counting of red rockfish in the historic foreign catch figures.

A minority of the GAP disagreed with these recommendations and suggested the Council should adopt the updated GMT proposals, especially in regard to canary rockfish.

The GAP also continues to recommend no tribal harvest of whiting be provided until such time as issues involving quantification and extent of tribal usual and accustomed areas are resolved by the courts.