

GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
STATUS OF FISHERIES AND CONSIDERATION OF INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to discuss inseason adjustments to the groundfish fishery. The GAP and the GMT agree on the following changes:

Open Access Near Shore Rockfish - South

Beginning May 1, 2001, the trip limit will be reduced to 1,200 pounds per two-month period. This reduction is designed to allow the open access fishery to continue longer during the year.

Near Shore Rockfish - North

If the Council agrees that both the limited access and open access fisheries will be managed to the combined target, then beginning May 1, 2001, both the open access and fixed gear limited entry fisheries will have a cumulative limit of 7,000 pounds per two-month period. For open access, no more than 900 pounds may be species other than black or blue rockfish. For limited entry, no more than 4,000 pounds may be species other than black or blue rockfish.

This change is proposed to allow limited entry fishers to use open access gear without being penalized by a lower limit. As a matter of equity, open access fishers will be allowed the same limit. The sub-limits are those currently in effect and reflect fishing patterns of the two fisheries. The GAP notes that, under the current limits, annual harvest is not being achieved.

Limited Entry Flatfish - North

For the period May 1, 2001 through June 30, 2001, trawl fishers using small footropes may take 50,000 pounds per month of flatfish other than Dover sole, of which no more than 15,000 pounds may be petrale sole and no more than 10,000 pounds may be arrowtooth flounder.

From May 1, 2001 to May 31, 2001, trawl fishers using large footropes may take 15,000 pounds of arrowtooth flounder per trip. From June 1, 2001 to June 30, 2001, those fishers may take 5,000 pounds of arrowtooth flounder per trip.

These changes were recommended following analysis of logbook data examining bycatch of canary rockfish. These limits will allow prosecution of near shore and deep water flatfish fisheries without exacerbating canary bycatch. The GAP and the GMT will continue to review existing data and may recommend additional changes at the June Council meeting.

The GAP also reviewed a proposal from the Washington Trollers Association which would allow an increased yellowtail rockfish bycatch retention in the salmon troll fishery. While the GAP was sympathetic to the desire to avoid discards, a majority of the GAP believed the increased retention would provide an advantage to the salmon troll fishery which is not available to other fisheries. The GAP majority notes that other fisheries have been making efforts to reduce bycatch and have not sought a bycatch increase. Further, the GAP majority is concerned about the effect of the increased yellowtail bycatch limit on canary bycatch.

A minority of the GAP supported the Washington Trollers Association proposal. They believe that the record supports a need for an increased yellowtail bycatch allowance for these open access fishermen, so bycatch can be landed. They further believe the yellowtail bycatch will not have an impact on canary rockfish bycatch.

The GAP minority supports allowing an additional yellowtail bycatch in conjunction with the directed harvest of salmon, under the conditions which the GMT indicated could be accommodated.