

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM COMMENTS ON
IMPLEMENTING WIDOW REBUILDING TARGETS IN 2002

Although it may be premature to present detailed analysis of management alternatives that will be needed to achieve specific rebuilding targets for widow rockfish, the GMT believes it is important to give the Council and the industry a heads-up on the magnitude of changes that will be needed. It is not too early to begin thinking about how the available widow can best be utilized next year.

The analysis submitted by Dr. Alec MacCall identifies a range of roughly 900-1,000 mt for harvest in 2002. The 2001 total catch OY for widow rockfish 2,300 mt, with roughly 2,200 mt available for the limited-entry fishery. Given this year's assumed bycatch in the at-sea whiting fishery of 250 mt and discard in the shore-based fishery, the landed catch available to the directed groundfish fishery is just over 1,600 mt. If the same set-asides for recreational (40 mt) and at-sea catch were used in conjunction with a 1,000 mt total catch target, the landed catch available for the directed limited-entry fishery would be 570 mt. Through March 17th of 2001, the limited-entry fleet landed 622 mt, with a mid-water limit of 20,000 lb per two months. Through March of 2000, the fleet landed just under 600 mt, with a mid-water limit of 30,000 lb per two months. Even if at-sea bycatch of widow could be cut in half, there would be insufficient fish available to allow for a mid-water target fishery for more than 3 months and accommodate incidental catch during the remainder of the year. Because of the co-occurrence of widow and yellowtail, this situation will also affect our ability to extend a mid-water opportunity for yellowtail rockfish throughout the year.