

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL COMMENTS ON
PRELIMINARY HARVEST LEVELS FOR 2002

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) briefly discussed the advisability of rolling over 2001 optimum yields (OYs) for the 2002 fisheries.

With one exception, the GAP sees no problem in rolling over OYs for those species on which no stock assessments are being conducted in 2001. For those species undergoing stock assessments, harvest levels should be set after completion of Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel analysis.

The exception which should be considered is Pacific whiting. The OY for Pacific whiting in 2001 was established on the basis of an unreviewed update of the 1999 stock assessment. While the GAP has no information as to whether further analysis is being conducted, the GAP is hesitant to simply roll over the 2001 OY without some indication from NMFS as to the current estimated state of the whiting stocks.

The GAP notes that the Council is scheduled to schedule a preliminary rebuilding plan for widow rockfish, which contains a range of proposed OYs. Since all of the proposed OYs will require significant reductions in midwater fisheries, the Council should consider choosing a preliminary OY, so fishermen will have notice to consider management alternatives that could be proposed in September.

Finally, the GAP notes that current Council practice calls for using standard assumptions on which group will take what amount of each species. As we saw this year with canary rockfish - and will see next year with widow rockfish - we can no longer rely on what used to be caught by whom. The GAP believes it is time for the Council to complete the formal allocation process that was begun some years ago. Business planning, enforcement, and management are better served when we have some confidence in what amount of fish will be available to each user group. We urge the Council to conclude the allocation process.

PFMC
06/14/01