

STATUS OF FISHERIES AND INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

Situation: In the current groundfish management program, the Council recommends annual optimum yield (OY) levels and cumulative vessel landing limits for specified periods. The purpose of these cumulative landing limits is to spread harvest over the year; typically, the initial limits need to be adjusted periodically through the year so total landings reach, but do not exceed, the OYs. The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) presented its first projections for 2001 at the April meeting, based on all the information available through early March. The Council recommended adjustments at the April meeting that were implemented May 1. The GMT will present an update on landings and new projections to the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP), and they will discuss any necessary adjustments. The Council considers GMT and GAP recommendations, along with public comment, before making recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for inseason adjustments.

An important issue discussed in November 2000 and April 2001 is bycatch reduction devices in the pink shrimp fishery. The Council is particularly concerned about canary rockfish bycatch in the pink shrimp trawl fishery, which is managed by the states of Washington, Oregon, and California. The management measures for the groundfish fisheries were predicated on the pink shrimp fishery taking no more than 5.5 mt of canary rockfish, a 50% reduction from the 11 mt average of recent years. While the Council and federal government may set limits on how much incidental groundfish may be retained and sold by pink shrimp fishers, the pink shrimp fishery is a matter of direct state jurisdiction. It falls to the coastal state governments to insure the canary rockfish impacts are minimized and do not exceed the preseason allowance. At the April meeting, representatives of each state's fish and wildlife management agencies reported their intentions regarding bycatch reduction devices in shrimp trawl nets. There was uncertainty as to when the states would begin to require all shrimp vessels to use such bycatch reduction devices. Several Council members expressed concern that failure by the coastal states to require the use of these devices as a mandatory measure may result in more than 5.5 mt of canary rockfish being caught. The Council sent letters to each of the three coastal states stressing the need to reduce canary rockfish bycatch to 5.5 mt in this fishery. The states are scheduled to provide an update on this issue at this meeting.

The Council's task at this meeting is to review the available information and projections and make recommendations to NMFS for any appropriate adjustments.

Council Action: Consider inseason adjustments.

Reference Materials:

None.

Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan Consistency Analysis

This agenda item requires Council decision making. Any proposed adjustments to trip limits or other measures should be evaluated for their effectiveness in bycatch reduction, achieving OYs, and preventing any sector's catch from closing another sector.