

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON  
MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2002 AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) began by meeting jointly with the Groundfish Management Team and the Scientific and Statistical Committee to receive a presentation on bycatch and discard analysis from Dr. Jim Hastie. Following the joint session, the GAP convened separately to discuss the issues under this agenda topic.

In regard to the bycatch/discard analysis, the GAP recognizes the extensive work done in a very short period of time, using sparse data. However, the inclusion of 1999 trawl logbook data in determining bycatch rates provides an incorrect assessment of discards. As the GAP has stated previously, the fishery has changed significantly since 1999. Trawl gear has been modified and fishing strategies have changed significantly. If the 1999 trawl logbook data is excluded, what can be inferred from the existing analysis is that discard rates are actually below what is shown. The GAP believes management should be changed to reflect that fact.

In regard to initial decisions on 2002 management measures, the GAP was unanimous in supporting a year- round fishery with no seasonal components (other than existing seasons for Pacific whiting and fixed gear sablefish) for all segments of the fishery.

The GAP has discussed seasonal or reduced-time fisheries on numerous occasions. The same problem is identified every time: the groundfish fishery is not uniform by area, by participation, by vessel size, or by processor capability. Trying to impose a one-size-fits-all template on a diverse fishery does not work. While stocks can be managed as a unit throughout their ranges, fishermen, processors, and coastal communities can't be.

The GAP recognizes the Council is legally constrained from using the tools that might be available to allow fishermen and processors to maximize their opportunities and operate efficiently within the bounds of conservation requirements. If those tools become fully available, you can expect wide-spread industry support for a different system. In the meantime, the GAP continues to support a year-round fishery.

PFMC  
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