

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON  
REVIEW PROCESS FOR CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY AND UPDATE ON  
OTHER MARINE RESERVES PROCESSES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the process for Council consideration of marine reserve issues and offers the following comments.

In general, we believe the Council needs to continue to take an active role regarding marine reserve issues in general and marine reserve proposals for national marine sanctuaries in particular. If the Council does not exercise its option to comment on sanctuary reserve proposals, then by default decisions on such proposals will be made at a level that allows little public comment. The Council forum is the best place for public involvement on the impact of reserve proposals on fishing to occur.

Further, the GAP notes there is no overall Council policy on how reserves will be integrated into the fisheries management process. Although reserves are identified as a tool in the groundfish strategic plan, how we use that tool in conjunction with other more traditional fisheries management measures is an issue that remains unclear. If the intent is to close off large areas of water to fishing, then expending effort on such tasks as inseason management or examination of other management measures is probably a waste. We are approaching groundfish management as a piecemeal process rather than a comprehensive examination of options.

There is also continuing confusion over the integration of the sanctuary process with California State law. A clear, agreed upon process needs to be established. There also needs to be a clear problem statement for reserves against which reserve proposals can be judged.

The GAP reviewed the draft proposal to establish a separate committee to review the Channel Islands and California documents that are being forwarded to the Council. As it has in the past, the GAP endorses the idea of having the work done by a separate committee. However, this endorsement is qualified, as the tentative committee structure provided to the GAP contains no representation of users. It is essential, in order to avoid the problems that have already occurred with lack of user involvement, that the GAP have a minimum of two members as full participants on the committee. If such representation is not provided, the GAP opposes the formation of a separate committee.

In addition, the GAP understands that draft revised charts of marine reserve areas may have already been constructed by Channel Islands staff. The GAP believes those materials should be provided to the Council and the public as soon as possible.

Finally, California members of the GAP expressed concern over the way in which advisory committees were formed under the Marine Life Protection Act. Although this is a state issue and not a matter for the Council, the California members believe it should be noted as an example of how the public perceives their participation is being denied.

PFMC  
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