

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT  
ON 2002 WHITING FISHERY

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed the action taken by the Council on Pacific whiting at the March 2002 Council meeting and the anticipated action by the National Marine Fisheries Service to deny the Council's request for an emergency rule and substitute harvest levels different than those recommended by the Council.

The GAP recognizes the fiscal problems faced by the Council. Nevertheless, the GAP believes it should have had the opportunity to review proposed Council action on whiting and provide appropriate comments to the Council, including proposed harvest levels. In the future, the GAP expects to be allowed to meet prior to major Council groundfish action.

In spite of not being part of the decision process, the majority of the GAP believes the Council based its recommendation on the scientific and economic data available and the input that was provided through public comment as noted in the Council's letter to NMFS (Exhibit E.1.c Supplemental Attachment 2). The majority believes NMFS has no cause to deny the Council's recommendation for an emergency rule and substitute its own numbers. With this in mind, the majority of the GAP recommends that - if the Council's request is overturned - the Council write a follow-up letter to the Under Secretary of Commerce protesting the action taken by NMFS.

A minority of the GAP believes the Council actions on whiting were not cautious enough, and lower levels of harvest should have been recommended.

PFMC  
04/09/02