

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
STATUS OF FISHERIES AND INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met jointly with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to discuss inseason adjustments to the groundfish fishery. In spite of extensive discussions to reach a consensus, the GAP and the GMT found themselves in fundamental disagreement on how best to continue viable fisheries while ensuring conservation of certain key fish stocks, especially darkblotched and bocaccio rockfish. The GAP thus submits the following recommendations which - while diverging from those made by the GMT - still - in our view, meet the Council's conservation goals. These comments are based on Table 1 which is included as part of Exhibit C.9.d - Supplemental GMT Report.

NORTH OF 40° 10'

The GAP agrees with the GMT Option 1, with the following changes:

Rather than closing all groundfish bottom trawling, beginning September 1, 2002, allow a DTS fishery outside of 250 fathoms and a shelf flatfish fishery inside of 125 fathoms. The shelf flatfish fishery would be restricted to small footrope gear only.

The GAP recognizes that implementing a depth-based change will require an emergency rule and requests that the Council ask that one be implemented.

In addition, the GAP recommends the following cumulative limit changes:

- a) reduce the cumulative limit of slope rockfish to 500 pounds / 2 month period for the remainder of the year
- b) reduce the cumulative limit of Pacific Ocean perch to 4,000 pounds / 2 month period for the remainder of the year.

These changes will ensure the continued conservation of canary and darkblotched rockfish, as well as those few yelloweye rockfish that may be incidentally taken in trawl gear. The recommended regulations will ensure that trawlers avoid the depths where these species are commonly taken.

SOUTH OF 40° 10'

The GAP agrees with the items listed under "Immediate Action" with one change:

In item #1, add a provision that nearshore flatfish may be retained by a vessel which has an observer on board.

The GAP disagrees with the options listed under "Further Action"

Where fathom limits are indicated, the GAP intends that they be identified as way points using latitude / longitude locations connected by straight lines sufficient in length to facilitate adequate enforcement. The GAP recommends that the state and federal enforcement agencies convene a panel of knowledgeable fishermen to help identify the points and draw the lines.

In the areas where trawling is restricted, only one type of net may be on board the vessel when fishing in the area.