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HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL
REPORT ON 2003 GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) reviewed proposed management measures for the 2003 groundfish fisheries. The intent of these measures, specifically the proposed rockfish conservation area, appears to be to protect overfished rockfish by reducing fishery impacts on these species. The HMSAS agrees with this intent, but stresses that consideration should be given to how highly migratory species (HMS) fisheries operate. The proposed measures do not appear to affect commercial HMS fisheries. However, HMS recreational fisheries will be affected by the proposed rockfish conservation area. The HMSAS recommends that a provision be added to exempt surface hook-and-line HMS fisheries (both commercial and recreational), rockfish retention would not be allowed. The HMSAS stresses that, given the nature of how surface hook-and-line fisheries operate, it is unlikely these fisheries will catch any of the overfished rockfish species.

The HMSAS also notes that possible coding errors in the database used for groundfish management (i.e., PacFIN) could mis-characterize incidental groundfish catch in commercial HMS fisheries (e.g., drift gillnet and albacore troll). The HMSAS encourages the use of observer data in concert with fishticket data to accurately determine the incidental catch of groundfish in commercial HMS fisheries.

PFMC
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