

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR APPROVING EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS

In response to the Council's request, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) developed a draft Council Operating Procedure that describes the standards and criteria for approving exempted fishing permits (Exhibit E.7., Supplemental Revised Attachment 2). These proposed standards and criteria are consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Council's West Coast groundfish fishery management plan, and draft National Marine Fisheries Service standards and protocols. The proposed standards and criteria include the following:

- Definition of exempted fishing permits (EFPs) and purposes for their use
- Description of the contents of a completed EFP application
- Review and approval process involving consideration of EFPs at the GMT, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and Council levels
- Suggested prioritization criteria for EFP applications
- List of questions the GMT will consider in reviewing EFP applications, including an evaluation of scientific data collection methods
- Other considerations regarding fishery-related violations of potential EFP participants
- Requirements for a preliminary report of the results and the data collected (including catch data) presented to the GMT at the June Council meeting following the implementation of the EFP, and a final written report that documents the data collection methodology and the results of the EFP to the Council and its advisory bodies in September

The GMT is recommending a proposed process and timeline for EFP review and consideration by the Council that consists of an annual two-meeting process at the September and November Council meetings (Exhibit E.7, Supplemental Attachment 3). The approach would include setting aside a portion of the optimum yields (OYs) for rebuilding species of concern as part of setting the acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and OYs in June; in the absence of EFP applications that meet the standards and criteria sufficient to take the portion of the OYs that have been set aside, there would be a release of those set asides back to the scheduled groundfish fisheries in September.

The GMT requests that the SSC also review EFP applications to evaluate the proposed data collection methodology to determine whether it is adequate to measure achievement of the EFP objectives.

The GMT recommends that the Council approve the draft Council Operating Procedure for the standards and criteria for approving EFPs, as revised, as well as the proposed process and timeline.