

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed and discussed the options for incidental catch regulations in the fixed gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, as identified in Exhibit F.1. The GAP recommends the Council adopt the status quo option (Option 1a), as it has not lead to excessive amounts of halibut bycatch.

A majority of the GAP recommends the Council also adopt Option 2, relating to the yelloweye rockfish conservation area, by establishing it as an area closed to fixed gear sablefish fishing. A minority of the GAP recommends Option 2 be adopted with the understanding that it is an area to be avoided, but no closure be formally implemented. Those favoring a formal closure, point out that it would be no different than closures already in place for the recreational fishery. Those opposing a formal closure argue that continuation of "area to be avoided" status will allow the fishing industry to demonstrate their willingness to voluntarily comply with conservation requirements.

The GAP also recommends the Council's liaison to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) make known to the IPHC the extensive closures and bycatch reduction efforts that are in effect for West Coast fisheries. The bycatch savings resulting from management efforts should be reflected in the IPHC's calculations for halibut bycatch.

Finally, a minority of the GAP recommends that some percentage of halibut taken incidentally by the trawl fishery be allowed to be landed. Proponents argue that this will not affect bycatch calculations, since bycatch has already been accounted for, but will prevent waste of fish that is otherwise discarded. Opponents continue to be opposed to the trawl harvest of halibut.

PFGC
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