

STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR APPROVING EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS

Situation: Exempted fishing permits (EFPs) allow fishing activities that would otherwise be prohibited. As an example, EFPs provide a process for testing innovative fishing gears and strategies to substantiate methods for prosecuting sustainable and risk-averse fishing opportunities. The Council has signaled its intent to make greater use of EFPs in the new groundfish management regime of depth restrictions and widespread area closures to reduce harvest of overfished species. However, there are potential drawbacks to significant EFP proliferation. Low optimum yields (OYs) for overfished species force hard allocation decisions between allowing immediate fleet-wide fishing opportunities in directed and incidental groundfish fisheries versus the longer term potential benefits ascribed to gaining new information from EFPs. Additionally, concerns were expressed about the need to manage the EFP approval process in a more timely manner and based on more explicit scientific criteria. For these reasons, the Council tasked the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) with recommending standards and criteria for approving EFPs.

The GMT recommended a draft Council Operating Procedure (COP) that prescribes a set schedule and other protocols for Council consideration in approving EFP applications at the April meeting. The Council approved the new COP but asked the GMT to reconsider a recommended timeline for reviewing and recommending EFPs that would better synchronize with the new Council process for setting specifications and management measures under multi-year management. The GMT has complied with the Council request for reconsidering the timeline and offers a Proposed Council Process for Consideration of Exempted Fishing Permits for Multi-Year Management (Exhibit B.6.b, GMT Report 2) and a Revised Proposed Council Operating Procedure: Protocol for Council Consideration of Exempted Fishing Permits for Pacific Coast Groundfish Fisheries (Exhibit B.6.b, GMT Report 3). The Council task at this meeting is to consider GMT recommendations for the EFP approval process and approve a new COP outlining a protocol for Council consideration of EFPs.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt a new Council Operating Procedure of criteria and scientific standards for approving EFPs.**

Reference Materials:

1. GMT Report on Standards and Criteria for Approving EFPs (Exhibit B.6.b, GMT Report 1).
2. Proposed Council Process for Consideration of Exempted Fishing Permits for Multi-Year Management (Exhibit B.6.b, GMT Report 2).
3. Revised Proposed Council Operating Procedure: Protocol for Council Consideration of Exempted Fishing Permits for Pacific Coast Groundfish Fisheries (Exhibit B.6.b, GMT Report 3).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Criteria and Standards for Approving EFPs

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