

PROPOSED MONITORING PROGRAM FOR THE SHORE-BASED
PACIFIC WHITING FISHERY

Situation: A permanent monitoring program for the shore-based Pacific whiting fleet needs to be developed and implemented, because of the specification in the Pacific Coast salmon and groundfish fishery management plans (FMPs) and the 1992 Biological Opinion analyzing the effects of the groundfish fishery on salmon stocks listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The issue of salmon retention in the groundfish trawl fisheries was brought before the Council in 1996 in the form of Amendment 10 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP and Amendment 12 to the Pacific Coast Salmon FMP. Based on an Environmental Assessment drafted to analyze these amendments, the Council recommended the exempted fishery permit (EFP) process be used temporarily until a permanent monitoring program could be developed and implemented in the shore-based Pacific whiting fishery. EFPs are intended to provide for limited testing of a fishing strategy, gear type, or monitoring program that may eventually be implemented on a larger fleet-wide scale and are not a permanent solution to the monitoring needs of the shore-based Pacific whiting fishery. Results of the shore-based Pacific whiting EFPs indicate that it is feasible to retain and appropriately monitor the incidental take of salmon and groundfish other than Pacific whiting in the shore-based Pacific whiting fishery. It is now appropriate to implement a permanent monitoring program for salmon and other non-target species incidentally taken in the shore-based Pacific whiting fishery.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) developed a preliminary draft Environmental Assessment which includes a range of alternative monitoring systems for the shore-based Pacific whiting fishery. The alternatives currently focus on three major issues: 1) staffing the monitoring program (i.e., federal observers, state monitors, video cameras, or a combination thereof); 2) tracking and disposition prohibited species and groundfish overages; and 3) funding of the monitoring program (i.e., federal, state, industry).

The Council needs to consider and adopt for public review the preliminary range of alternatives for a monitoring program for the shore-based Pacific whiting fishery. Final Council action on this matter is scheduled for November, when the Council identifies a preferred alternative. NMFS will then prepare a proposed rule for public comment followed by a final rule implementing a monitoring program before the start of the 2004 primary Pacific whiting season.

Council Action:

1. Adopt Alternatives for Public Review.

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit C.7, Attachment 1, Preliminary Environmental Assessment, Implementing a Monitoring Program to Provide a Full Retention Opportunity in the Shore-based Pacific Whiting Fishery, NMFS, Northwest Region.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. NMFS Preliminary Environmental Assessment
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Adopt Alternatives for Public Review

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