

Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment

Amendment 10 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP

Implementing a Monitoring Program to Provide a Full Retention Opportunity in the Shore-based Whiting Fishery

History of Monitoring in the Shore-based Whiting Fishery

- 1992 - Biological Opinion analyzing the effects of the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery on salmon stocks listed under the ESA
- 1992 - Shoreside Whiting Observer Program
- 1996 - Amendment 10 to the Groundfish FMP and Amendment 12 to the Salmon FMP

Monitoring Needs in the Shore-based Whiting Fishery

- Sampling and immediate release of salmon incidentally taken in the whiting fishery
- EFPs provide for limited testing of a technique that may eventually be implemented on a fleet-wide scale
- Trip limit management difficult for shore-based whiting fleet
- Monitoring program should be designed for a full retention fishery

Purpose of the Proposed Action

- Provide for a full retention fishery
- Meet the terms and conditions of the 1992 Salmon Biological Opinion
- Maintain the integrity of Pacific Coast groundfish rebuilding plans
- Reduce discard by allowing the landing of prohibited species and groundfish in excess of cumulative trip limits

Need for the Proposed Action

- Groundfish FMP specifies that salmon caught in trawl nets are a prohibited species
- 50 CFR 660.306 and Groundfish FMP specifies that salmon must be returned to the sea as soon as practicable
- Salmon FMP specifies that the use of nets to capture salmon is prohibited
- 50 CFR 660.306 specifies that landing groundfish in excess of trip limits is prohibited

Components of a Monitoring Program (Issues)

- Monitoring the harvesting and dock-side aspects of the shore-based fishery
- Tracking the overage/donation fish and the money paid for those fish
- Funding sources for a shore-based monitoring program

Monitoring Options (Alternatives)

- No Action Alternative (EFP process)
- Federal Monitoring Program
- State Monitoring Program
- Combination Monitoring Program

Alternative 1 – EFP Process

- Issue 1 - State port samplers track and sample salmon and overfished groundfish species at processing plants
- Issue 2 - State and federal enforcement staff share the tracking of overage/donation fish and the money paid for those fish
- Monitoring program is funded by the shore-based whiting fishery and state and federal management agencies

Alternative 2 - Federal Monitoring

- Issue 1 - Federal observers would monitor for full retention at sea and sample salmon and overfished groundfish species at processing plants
- Issue 2 - Federal enforcement personnel would track overage/donation fish and the money paid for those fish
- Issue 3 - Monitoring program would be federally funded (2A) or funded by the shore-based whiting fleet through a direct pay system (2B)

Alternative 3 – State Monitoring

- Issue 1 - State monitors would monitor for full retention at sea and would sample salmon and overfished groundfish species at processing plants
- Issue 2 - State enforcement personnel would track overage/donation fish and the money paid for those fish
- Issue 3 - Monitoring program would be funded by each state (3A) or funded through a tax system (3B)

Alternative 4 – Combination Monitoring

- Electronic monitoring would monitor all shore-based whiting trips for full retention and state monitors would sample salmon and overfished groundfish species at processing plants
- State and federal enforcement staff would share the tracking of overage/donation fish and the money paid for those fish
- Monitoring program is funded by the shore-based whiting fishery and state and federal management agencies

Analysis of the Alternatives

- Effects of implementing a monitoring program on the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery
- Most alternatives predicted to have a minimal effect on the groundfish fishery
- Alternatives vary by cost and the quality of the data produced

Alternative 1 – EFP Process

- No monitoring at sea to document full retention or discard at sea
- State port samplers sample 10% - 35% of shore-based whiting deliveries
- Preliminary cost estimate is \$148,000
- Program is funded by industry and management agencies
- Generates the least amount of fisheries data

Alternative 2 – Federal Monitoring

- Federal observers document full retention or discard at sea on 100% of shore-based whiting trips
- Federal observers sample 100% of shore-based whiting deliveries
- Preliminary cost estimate is greater than \$2,000,000
- Program is either federally funded (2A) or funded by industry (2B)
- Generates the greatest amount of fisheries data

Alternative 3 – State Monitoring

- State monitors document full retention or discard at sea on a portion of shore-based whiting trips
- State monitors sample a portion of shore-based whiting deliveries
- Preliminary cost estimate is \$1,060,000
- Program is either state funded (3A) or funded by industry (3B)
- Generates more fisheries data than Alt. 1, less than Alt. 2, and a similar amount as Alt. 4

Alternative 4 – Combination Monitoring

- Electronic monitoring system documents full retention or discard at sea on a 100% of shore-based whiting trips
- State monitors sample a portion of shore-based whiting deliveries
- Preliminary cost estimate is \$600,000
- Program is funded by industry and management agencies
- Generates more fisheries data than Alt. 1, less than Alt. 2, and a similar amount as Alt. 3

Need for Further Analysis

- Total cost associated with each of the alternatives needs to be determined
- Projected federal and state budgets for 2004 and beyond should be considered
- Shore-based whiting fleet's funding ability should be projected into the future and consider cumulative effects