

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
OBSERVER DATA FLOW FOR FISHERY YEARS 2004-2006

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with Dr. Jim Hastie of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center to discuss observer data flow.

The GAP continues to express its frustration that observer data lags at least a year behind current fisheries management. You cannot drive a car by looking through the rear-view mirror; neither can you adequately manage a fishery by looking at what everyone did last year, when this year's circumstances have altered dramatically. For example, in 2004 we will be conducting a trawl fishery with substantially reduced effort resulting from a Council supported buyback, yet our discard estimates will be based on a significantly higher effort level. The model and reality do not match.

Similarly, we are concerned that the model - in spite of the efforts made by Dr. Hastie - still does not reflect the seasonality of bycatch. Fish are not uniformly distributed over time and space, and neither are bycatch or discards, regardless of gear used. Seasonality needs to be taken into account.

Finally, we remain concerned about the "rebuilding paradox" - as fish abundance increases while harvest levels remain low in order to comply with rebuilding dictates, bycatch and discards of non-target species will also increase. The observer discard model - and indeed, the Council's management program - has no way to deal with this frustrating phenomenon.

On a positive note, we recognize - and appreciate - the fact that the Northwest Fisheries Science Center is planning on revising its observer reporting program to provide data in synchronization with the Council's management process. We believe this is a helpful change which will prevent the sort of "April surprise" that we all suffered through this year.

PFMC
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