

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
STATUS OF GROUND FISH FISHERIES AND INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the statement developed by the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) on this agenda item and makes the following comments in response to the GMT recommendations on page 5 of their statement.

Cowcod Conservation Area

The GAP agrees with the GMT suggestion that federal regulations be amended to achieve the necessary prohibitions, with one exception. The GAP notes that recreational fishing for sanddabs is permitted in the area as long as specific hook gear is used. Such fishing has been analyzed as having no impact on cowcod. The GAP believes that, for equity, commercial fishing for sanddabs in this area also be permitted, as long as the same hook gear - which has zero impact - is used.

Cordell Banks

The GAP recommends the suggested closure on Cordell Banks be accomplished by adjusting the 75 fm and 100 fm Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) boundaries for the trawl fishery. This can be done fairly easily and avoids having a separate closed area adjacent to the RCA.

Bycatch Caps on California Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs)

The GAP has no objection to changing the amount of bocaccio rockfish and cowcod assigned to the California selective flatfish EFP, since there appears to be sufficient fish available to accommodate this request.

Updated Bycatch Scorecard

The GAP will reserve comment on this issue and address widow rockfish numbers under agenda item E.5.

Setting Separate Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)/Optimum Yield (OY) by Region

The GAP believes this is a lengthy, long-term discussion item with significant allocative and enforcement impacts which need to involve all sectors of the fishery and both federal and state management entities. This is a process that is much more complex than can be handled in the two meetings remaining to approve 2005-2006 specifications.

California Recreational Harvest of Black Rockfish

The GAP continues to express its concern with using Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) data for management and believes it is urgent a new system be put in place with more accurate and up-to-date reporting. Nevertheless, the GAP recognizes we have to use the data available to address management issues, no matter how suspect that data may be. The GAP, therefore, supports the GMT recommendation that the Council request California to develop more restrictive management measures for recreational harvest of black rockfish. Specifically, the request should include asking California to examine reducing bag limits, moving scheduled closed periods to earlier in the year, institute area closures, and consider

differential regulations among recreational sectors.

In addition to the recommendations in the GMT statement, the GAP offers comments on several other issues:

Recreational Boat Limits in California Recreational Fishery

The GAP disagrees with the GMT suggestion that boat limits not be included as an inseason adjustment due to lack of analysis. The GAP believes boat limits could be helpful in converting dead discards to landed catch.

Recreational Fishery Enforcement in the RCA

The GAP discussed with the Enforcement Consultants (EC) a proposal to clarify how recreational fishing can be conducted inside and outside the RCA. The GAP supports the EC option of allowing recreational fishing for nongroundfish species within the RCA and groundfish species outside the RCA in the same trip and prohibiting possession of groundfish within the RCA while fishing gear is deployed. However, the GAP expressed its concern that the EC proposal is not fully enforceable because of the large number of vessels that can potentially violate the integrity of the RCA.

Therefore, the GAP urges the Council to do the following:

- Reconvene the Ad Hoc Open Access Conversion Subcommittee and direct it to complete its recommendations to the Council on how to deal with the open access fishery; when doing so, the Council should also review the membership of the Committee and determine whether it is appropriate.
- Request the Ad Hoc Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Committee to continue examining extension of the VMS system to vessels which harvest groundfish and which are not currently subject to VMS requirements.

PFMC

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