

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
ARTIFICIAL REEFS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from Mr. George Steinbach regarding proposals to allow oil platforms to be kept in place in the waters off California in order to take advantage of any fish attraction qualities.

The GAP held a lengthy discussion on the benefits and costs of keeping unused oil facilities in place. Some members believed that platforms should be removed for aesthetic reasons, in order to restore fishable area and to comply with the original intent of the offshore oil leases. Other members suggested that the possible fish attraction qualities could be beneficial, that the facilities could operate as de facto marine reserves, and that there was greater potential harm to resources from removing platforms. Some members expressed concern about potential pollution problems associated with platforms and whether these problems are worse if the platforms are left intact or are removed.

GAP members had many questions about the proposed trust fund, including the amount, who the recipients would be, and how the money would be used, especially if there is a need to mitigate impacts on fisheries.

In the end, the GAP agreed there are too many unanswered questions, and the best approach would be to have an independent study, not a study conducted by potential beneficiaries, conducted to examine the questions of pollution, costs and benefits, and effects on fish and their habitat. The GAP recommends the Council exercise its authority to comment on habitat matters by requesting such a study, perhaps by the National Academy of Sciences, through the appropriate federal agency.

PFMC
03/11/04