

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
 REPORT ON PROPOSED EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS (EFPs) FOR 2005 AND 2006

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is proposing to include the provisions of our Arrowtooth Flounder Trawl EFP into the federal regulations for 2005 and 2006. These provisions include mandatory observer coverage (using state-sponsored monitors), bycatch caps for overfished species, and rockfish retention. This proposal would allow fishers to access portions of the trawl rockfish conservation area (RCA), provided those provisions were met. (Note: A full description of this proposal is contained in Exhibit C.10.a., Attachment 2.) The portions of the RCA that could be accessed with this proposal have lower rockfish encounter rates, and would be specified by latitude/longitude as part of the regulations.

As a result of discussions with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), it is our understanding that these provisions may need additional analysis beyond what can be accommodated in the 2005-06 specifications EIS. As such, if the Council approves the WDFW proposal, then NMFS may have to file a regulatory amendment to move the proposed arrowtooth trawl fishery into federal regulations through a separate process. It is unclear whether the regulatory amendment process would be finalized in time for the arrowtooth trawl fishery to begin in May 2005. Recognizing that the arrowtooth flounder fishery is extremely important to Washington trawl fishers and local processors, WDFW received guidance from NMFS to have a "placeholder" for an Arrowtooth Trawl EFP for 2005.

Based on this guidance, WDFW is proposing the following EFPs for 2005, in priority order, with the associated bycatch caps (in mt):

	Canary	Darkbl	Lingcod*	POP	Widow	Yelloweye
Arrowtooth Trawl	2.5	3.0	4.5	18.0	5.5	0.5
Longline Dogfish	0.1	0.5	2.0	8.5	0.5	1.0
Midwater Pollock	0.1	---	---	---	1.5	0.1

(* Cap would accommodate current trip limits)

The longline dogfish EFP has been conducted in 2003 and 2004. The EFP requirements include qualifying criteria that would have allowed three vessels to participate each year, however, only one vessel has indicated an interest. It is our intention to continue this EFP for one more year (2005) and remove the qualifying criteria to provide an opportunity for additional participation. If the results of the experiment continue to be positive, we would like to explore allowing this fishery in 2006 through the use of "hotspot" management.

The pollock EFP was introduced last year, but was not successful. It was conducted during an earlier time period (May) when pollock were not easily targeted. In 2004, the EFP will run in late summer and we would propose the same time period for 2005. It is our intent to use the data collected in the EFP to provide a pollock fishery in 2006, either through federal regulations (if pollock are added to the fishery management plan) or through state regulations, as appropriate.

Therefore, WDFW is not proposing any EFPs for the 2006 fishing year.