

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
MONITORING PROGRAM ALTERNATIVES FOR THE SHORE-BASED PACIFIC
WHITING FISHERY

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with staff from the NMFS Northwest Region to discuss options on monitoring programs for the Pacific whiting fishery.

The GAP concentrated its attention on Table 2.6.1 in Exhibit C.7.a Attachment 1, the Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA). While the GAP generally agrees that the PDEA covers the range of alternatives, it suggests that the Council include two sets of sub-options which will more fully encompass the alternatives.

Under Alternative 3, in the category of "Tracking Disposition of Overage/Donation Fish," the GAP recommends two sub-options. The first would consist of the current option, having federal personnel track overages. The second would mirror the option in Alternative 4, which would have state personnel track overages. Regardless of who is responsible for overall monitoring, the GAP notes that state enforcement personnel currently track overages and would likely do so in the future. Overages are usually handled under state fish and wildlife laws and regulations and that well known and accepted process should continue, especially since state landing fee laws are applied to landings of overages.

Under both Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, in the category of "Sampling Prohibited and Overfished Species," the GAP recommends additional sub-options which we would label "3B(4)" and "4B(4)." Under these sub-options, funding would be shared by the federal government, the states, and the whiting industry, rather than placing the entire financial burden on a single entity. Members of the whiting industry indicated a willingness to share in funding as partners with the states and the federal government, and this possibility should be let open.

Finally, the GAP recommends the Council not rush to judgement on this program by picking a preferred alternative in September. The GAP notes that the shore-based whiting fishery has just begun using video monitors in the current whiting season. We should allow some time to fully examine the successes and failures of the video monitoring effort before pushing ahead with a preferred alternative. Our goal is not to delay the program, but rather to ensure that the best, most cost-effective monitoring program can be developed and put in place.