

CONSIDERATION OF LIMITED REFINEMENTS TO THE 2005/2006 FISHERY MANAGEMENT SPECIFICATIONS

The Council has just completed the first biennial groundfish management decision-making process by setting final 2005-2006 management measures in June. Since that time, the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and Council staff completed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) supporting those decisions, which is in the National Environmental Policy Act public review period. In the course of completing the DEIS, a few errors were discovered. In particular, two specifications for the limited entry fixed gear sector should be reconsidered before implementation of new management measures. These two specifications are the thornyhead trip limits for the limited entry fixed gear fishery and the 2006 fixed gear sablefish tier limits.

Since the June Council meeting when the Council-preferred Alternative was decided, the GMT realized the increase in trawl trip limits for thornyheads due to fleet reduction from the trawl buyback program were probably not intended to apply to the limited entry fixed gear fleet, which was not subject to a buyback program. The GMT expressed concern that the limited entry fixed gear thornyhead limits are too high, which might lead to early attainment of the shortspine thornyhead OY. Therefore, the GMT recommends the Council re-specify lower 2005 and 2006 thornyhead trip limits for the limited entry fixed gear sector at this meeting.

The GMT also revised projections of anticipated research catches in 2005 and 2006 subsequent to the June Council meeting. The revision in the anticipated research catch of sablefish affected the calculation of the 2006 limited entry fixed gear allocation of sablefish and the 2006 tier limits. The GMT originally set aside 53 mt of expected sablefish catch in 2005 and 2006 research fisheries when they modeled the effects of alternative limited entry fixed gear sablefish management measures. However, the revised research catch estimates of 48.2 mt of sablefish in 2005 and 86 mt of sablefish in 2006 affected these model results. While the 2005 sablefish tier limits and associated overfished species' impacts did not change, the 2006 specifications did. The revised 2006 tier limits are 62,700 pounds for Tier 1; 28,500 pounds for Tier 2; and 16,300 pounds for Tier 3 with an associated slight decrease in the estimated impact on overfished species (Table 2-29c [excerpted from the DEIS], Agendum C.3.a, Attachment 1). The Council should consider re-specifying the 2006 tier limits at this meeting.

Council Action:

- 1. Consider re-specifying 2005 and 2006 limited entry fixed gear thornyhead limits.**
- 2. Consider re-specifying 2006 limited entry fixed gear sablefish tier limits.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agendum C.3.a, Attachment 1: Table 2-29c. Revised 2006 sablefish primary fishery tier limits and projected bycatch of depleted species associated with all sablefish catch in the limited entry fixed-gear fishery to be considered by the Council in September 2004.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Recommendations for Specification Refinements

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