

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON  
EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS FOR 2005

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) supports the two exempted fishing permits (EFPs) proposed for Council consideration (California Selective Flatfish Trawl/Scottish Seine EFP and Whiting EFP) be approved for implementation in 2005.

The GMT appreciates the reports from California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) on their EFPs from 2002 and 2003 on the use of Scottish seine gear in the California shelf fishery. CDFG conducted the Selective Flatfish Trawl/Scottish seine EFP in 2004 as well, and had one participant who used Scottish seine gear. Based on the Scottish seine data collected in 2002-2004, the GMT believes a sufficient amount of data has been collected to demonstrate the bycatch rates from using the modified Scottish seine gear within the area fished and is unsure of what useful data would be collected by repeating this experiment for a fourth year in 2005.

In addition, with regard to Scottish seine gear, the GMT notes that the data collected through these EFPs has been the result of one participant fishing in the area local to San Francisco, California. The GMT believes that when these data are used to provide this fishery in federal regulations, the geographic scope of this fishing opportunity should be constrained to the area in which the data have been collected (i.e., a region encompassing the San Francisco area using management lines at 36° and 38°) as the data have been collected from only one vessel and non-EFP data are not available.

Also, the GMT is concerned that there has not been much participation in these EFPs with fishers using selective flatfish trawl gear (no participants in 2003, and one participant in 2004). The GMT believes there are incentives not to participate in the EFP (i.e., fishers would have to convert their trawl nets at a cost and would be required to carry at-sea observers and adhere to bycatch caps). To the extent that trawl fishers are able to be successful under existing federal regulations, there are little benefits to participating in the EFP which would outweigh these costs.

The GMT discussed the merits of implementing selective flatfish trawl gear. While only limited testing has been conducted to date south of 40°10', and bycatch rates for species such as bocaccio rockfish have not been calculated, there is more than sufficient data that supports its ability to selectively harvest flatfish while reducing rockfish impacts. As this gear has been demonstrated to be more selective than small footrope gear, the GMT advocates its use. The GMT notes that data were sparse for the use of this gear north of Destruction Island, Washington, but the data collected in the research and EFP conducted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife were sufficient to support using this gear north of 40°10' to the U.S./Canada border. The understanding is that bycatch data would be collected through the NMFS observer program during 2005 while this gear was being used in this area. The GMT believes a similar approach south of 40°10' may have merit even in the absence of EFP data for this area.

## **GMT Recommendations**

The GMT recommends moving forward with implementing the use of both Scottish seine gear and selective flatfish trawl gear in federal regulations, beginning in 2006, regardless of whether data have been collected through the CDFG selective flatfish trawl EFP.

PFMC  
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