

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 18-BY CATCH

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received a presentation from Ms. Yvonne de Reynier (National Marine Fisheries Service [NMFS]) and Dr. Kit Dahl (Council Staff) at our February meeting on the preliminary draft documents to implement Amendment 18. After reviewing the preliminary draft Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) as Amended through Amendment 18 (Agenda Item F.5.a, Attachment 1) and the preliminary draft Groundfish Bycatch Mitigation Program Work Plan (Agenda Item F.5.a, Attachment 3) the GMT has the following comments and suggestions for consideration:

Preliminary Draft FMP Amendment 18

It is our understanding that the groundfish FMP is being amended to “authorize the use of section-specific total catch limit programs to reduce bycatch of overfished (depleted) species in appropriate sectors of the fishery.” However, as one purpose of the FMP amendment is to provide a framework for future program direction, the GMT recommends that the Council’s authority to develop and use specific total catch limit programs to reduce bycatch be broadened to cover all species in the groundfish FMP management unit. Even though the preferred alternative at this point is specific to overfished stocks, this change would provide the Council with the flexibility to consider other groundfish species through future management action.

In Section 2.2, Operational Definition of Terms, the GMT suggests adding a definition for the term “total catch limits” as is used in the preliminary draft FMP Amendment. The GMT notes that an explanation of “total catch limits” is in the preliminary draft Work Plan (Section 3.1.1.) and refers to “total fishing mortality and includes both landed catch and discard mortality,” and suggests this same language be used in the draft FMP Amendment.

Preliminary Draft Work Plan

Consistent with the Allocation Committee recommendations, the GMT anticipates that the work plan includes analyses of total catch limit implementation for overfished species and ten fishery sectors. Under Section 3.1.2., the Draft Work Plan states that Sector/Vessel-specific Total Catch Limit Implementation could be evaluated as part of the 2007-08 specification process. The GMT notes that some elements may be addressed most quickly and efficiently in these specifications, whereas other elements may be intended to apply over a longer period and may be best implemented through an alternative process. If the total catch limit implementation is addressed in the 2007-08 specification process, the GMT recommends the following options for analysis and anticipates that other species and sub-sectors may be added to this list as we progress through the analyses:

- *Limited entry trawl sub-sectors (three Pacific whiting and other limited entry trawl) and tribal sector: separate catch limits for canary and widow rockfish for each sector.* The GMT recommends adding darkblotched rockfish to the list. The GMT notes that there are likely legal issues surrounding whether tribal fisheries could be subject to total catch limits for overfished species and, if so, under what circumstances. Therefore, the GMT recommends the Council receive legal guidance on this issue before pursuing total catch limits for tribal fisheries.

- *Sablefish-endorsed limited entry fixed gear sub-sector: canary and yelloweye rockfish.* The GMT recommends including the non-sablefish-endorsed limited entry fixed gear fleet either separately or in combination with the sablefish-endorsed fleet. The GMT notes that a portion of the limited entry fixed gear fleet largely targets other groundfish species than sablefish. As such, the different bycatch rates among sub-sectors should be considered before establishing bycatch caps for a combined or separate sector.
- *Recreational fishery sub-sectors (Oregon and Washington, California): canary and yelloweye rockfish.* The GMT recommends removing the recreational fishery sub-sector definitions to provide flexibility to consider any combination of sub-sectors. The GMT recommends adding lingcod to the list. If the Council chooses to broaden the authority to include non-overfished species, then the GMT recommends adding black rockfish and cabezon to the list.