

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) is proposing a change in its designation document to incorporate within its boundaries the area of Davidson Seamount and to prohibit taking of marine resources within that area below a depth of 3,000 feet. Although no fishing is conducted at that depth, MBNMS is concerned about potential deep-water harvest of organisms such as sponges and corals.

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) opposes the MBNMS proposal as presented. As noted in our general comments under Agenda Item H.1, there are other means using existing authority to provide any necessary protection to NMS resources without either increasing the size of the existing MBNMS by nearly ten percent or giving fisheries management authority to MBNMS.

The GAP recommends the Council consider Davidson Seamount as a candidate for designation as a Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC), with an allowance for continued surface fishing, especially albacore trolling and swordfish drift netting. If necessary, the Council should consider protection of sponges and coral either through the HAPC designation or by including these organisms under an existing fishery management plan, as is being done for krill.

A minority of the GAP agrees with the overall recommendations but believes that inclusion of Davidson Seamount within the boundaries of MBNMS should be supported.

PFMC
03/10/05