

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
STATUS OF 2005 GROUND FISH FISHERIES AND INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF
INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met several times with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to develop recommendations for inseason adjustments to the groundfish fishery and associated regulations.

The GAP supports the changes in California recreational seasons, areas, and limits proposed by the GMT. The California members of the GMT provided a comprehensive report to the GAP at our March 2005, meeting on the results of the California Recreational Fisheries Survey. If the GMT is confident the survey results are ready to be used to make inseason adjustments, then the GAP supports making appropriate corrections using that data.

Similarly, the GAP supports the adjustments in the trawl groundfish fishery identified by the GMT as Table 7, Option 2B. These adjustments are two-fold: a downward adjustment in petrale sole, Dover sole, and other flatfish to account for the increased landings that occurred in the first part of this year and an upward adjustment in the slope rockfish limits between 38E and 40E10', which the GMT had previously indicated might need to be made after early 2005 data was reviewed. In regard to the petrale sole *et. al* adjustment, the GAP notes that this will provide summer opportunities for smaller vessels and reduce discards and help maintain a year-round fishery which provides economic benefits during the summer season. The GAP will continue to work with the GMT to make any further appropriate adjustments later in the year.

The GAP also supports the regulatory language changes recommended by the GMT regarding California commercial regulations, clarifying the use of chafing gear on trawls and clarifying the description of selective flatfish trawls.

Finally, the GAP requests the Council consider modifying the existing regulatory language describing the placement of chafing gear. The current language was developed before small footrope trawls and selective flatfish trawls were in wide use, and fishermen have found that it no longer fits with modern trawl construction. The GAP received reports of fishermen having considerable difficulty retrieving their gear, due to twisting caused by the required placement of chafing gear. The GAP believes it would be appropriate to consider modifications in a time frame parallel to developing the 2007 - 2009 annual management specifications. Making the change at this time would impose the least workload burden on NMFS and Council staff. If the Council accepts this approach, the GAP will work with industry, the GMT, NMFS, and the Enforcement Consultants to provide a workable and enforceable suggested regulatory amendment.

PFMC
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