

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

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) met with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) to discuss inseason adjustments for the groundfish fishery. The GAP makes the following recommendations.

Limited Entry Trawl

The GAP supports the GMT option that would move the seaward boundary of the Rockfish Conservation Area to 180 fathoms north of 40E10', with accompanying changes in cumulative limits and establishment of a trigger mechanism based on landed catch of darkblotched rockfish and slope rockfish. Movement of the seaward boundary will allow vessels to target available fish along the 200 fathom curve, while the trigger mechanism will ensure harvest of sensitive species does not reach excessive levels as occurred last year.

The GAP also supports the increase in slope rockfish limits in the area between 38E and 40E10', again accompanied with a trigger mechanism based on landings of darkblotched and slope rockfish. The increase in this area tracks with the Council decision in April to provide a staged increase in slope rockfish.

The GAP does not support a reduction in the yellowtail rockfish limits available to selective flatfish trawl fishermen north of 40E10'. Yellowtail are highly abundant, and decreasing the trip limit will only result in catch being converted to discards. The existing 2,000 pound bi-monthly limit is not going to lead to targeting, especially using a selective flatfish trawl. No data has been provided to show that canary impacts are increasing above projected levels under the existing cumulative limits. The GAP believes this is a precautionary adjustment that is not needed.

Limited entry fixed gear

The GAP supports the recommendations to increase the limit on minor nearshore rockfish to 6,000 pounds/two months between 40E10' and 42E and to increase shelf rockfish limits to 3,000 pounds/two months. south of 34E27'. Both of these fisheries are well below attainment levels. Given the sparsity of data in the southern area, the GAP urges NMFS - if possible - to increase observer coverage on vessels fishing for shelf rockfish in this area.

Open access gear

The GAP supports GMT recommendations to increase minor nearshore rockfish limits to 6,000 pounds/two months. between 40E10' and 42E, and shelf rockfish limits to 750 pounds/two months south of 34E27'.

PFMC
06/15/05