

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
AMENDMENT 18 (BYCATCH) AND THE WORK PLAN PRACTICABILITY ANALYSIS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard a report from Kit Dahl, Council Staff, on Amendment 18 with further explanation provided by Yvonne deReynier, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The GAP identified three separate issues that require comment and our discussion focused on these three issues. These issues are the coupling of two plan amendments, the draft language of Amendment 18 itself, and the associated work plan that implements the fishery management plan (FMP). The GAP did not receive the Preliminary Discussion Draft of the Practicality Analysis for Amendment 18 in time to review and provide comments for this agenda item.

**Decoupling FMP Amendments**

The GAP believes that combining Amendment 18 and Amendment 19 has created significant confusion about the contents of the amendments and also blurs the time table for adopting the amendments. The GAP recommends that Amendment 18 be decoupled from Amendment 19 and proceed through the process separately. In addition, the GAP strongly recommends that future amendments be taken up separately.

**Amendment 18 Draft Language**

Amendment 18 was characterized by Council and NMFS staff as a “conceptual” document outlining the types of tools available to the Council to mitigate bycatch in the groundfish fisheries. The GAP believes that Amendment 18 can serve as a good document detailing the conceptual nature of possible tools in the Council’s tool box. However, members of the GAP have concerns over some of the definitions that are contained within the document.

For example, on page 40 of Agenda Item H.6.a, Attachment 1, the first full sentence on the page states, “Once a total catch limit is attained, all vessels in the sector MUST cease fishing until the end of the limit period, unless the total catch limit is increased by the transfer of an additional limit amount” (emphasis added). This language is in a section describing how a Sector-specific Total Catch Limit Program could work. GAP members are concerned that hardwiring this type of specific language into an FMP greatly limits the Council’s flexibility and creativity when attempting to actually implement a workable plan.

**Implementation Work Plan**

The GAP’s comments in this area focus on the “pilot program” concept contained in the workplan implementation process. The GAP agrees with the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) statement from September 2005, that “current monitoring programs are not sufficient to monitor harvest against sector total catch limits and that the necessary enhancement will not occur prior to the 2007-2008 cycle.”

The GAP does not, however, endorse the GMT recommendation to implement a pilot program for sector bycatch limits on one sector of the industry in order to evaluate the capabilities and constraints within our current management structure. The GAP is unable to broadly endorse the pilot program concept without knowing more about the proposed program.

The GAP has two major concerns: 1) too many pilot programs have the propensity to become permanent; and 2) placing hard caps on a single sector of the fishery would unfairly disadvantage that particular sector without allowing management to realize the overall benefits of a hard cap program.

While the GAP is very supportive of developing hard bycatch caps for all sectors of the industry, placing hard caps on a single sub-sector would put that portion of the sector at a distinct disadvantage from other sectors and potentially at the risk of a permanent program.

PFMC  
11/02/05