

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
AMENDMENT 19 (ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT)

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed Amendment 19 draft language and the associated implementing regulations for essential fish habitat (EFH). Mr. Steve Copps, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), was available to answer questions regarding the proposed regulations and encouraged the GAP to provide technical comments as appropriate.

Specific comments on draft language include:

1. Page 6, Item J, should read: Trawl Fishing Line. A length of chain, *rope*, or wire rope....
2. Include a definition of “stowed” as it relates to recreational fishing gear

Specific comments on boundaries to closed areas include:

1. The closed areas for Potato Bank, Cherry Bank, and Hidden Reef/Kidney Bank are much larger than the actual banks – these areas should be downsized to reflect agreements between stakeholders.
2. Adjacent to Soquel Canyon the EFH line should follow the 60 fathom curve as was agreed to by stakeholders. The current proposal cuts into the center of the halibut trawl grounds.

The GAP also notes that there is inconsistency between the EFH draft regulations provided by NMFS and the proposed regulations provided by the Sanctuary and that these inconsistencies should be analyzed and corrected.

On a separate but related issue, the GAP recognizes that the EFH closed area in Monterey Bay will eliminate most of the area as available for fishing. Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) has proposed a cable observatory in the only open area left after the EFH closed area is applied. The GAP would recommend to the Council that a letter be sent to the National Science Foundation (which is funding MBARI), MBARI, and the Monterey Sanctuary regarding this issue which could impact the fishery in that area unfairly.